Revisiting Past Practice: Traditional Japanese Dance Origins and Contemporary Dance Choreographic Practice

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Introduction: Finding My Own Home, Place-Making For Me As A Dance Artist

Dancing Body As The Location of Culture

"It is the trope of our times to locate the question of culture in the realm of the beyond."

"[T]he very act of going beyond are unknowable, unrepresentable, without a return to the 'present'"

-Homi K. Bhabha, 'The Location of Culture'

Past, Present, and Future. Which time do you think you are paying attention to? Are you focused on gaining information as knowledge from the past so that you can employ what you have learned from the past to the present moment to enhance a future? When practicing dance, these time periods are simultaneously present in the body, including intention, and movements in relation to places where you were, where you are, and where you will be. The forms of dance are learned by practicing methods, techniques, and aesthetics rooted in a culture that has been passed down and gets soaked up by a present body that performs in the current moment or future. Such embodied transference becomes tradition, which in turn becomes culture.

Dance is a culture that has been embodied over time and the dancer's body is "the location of culture" (Bhabha, 2004, p.1). Dance has a unique feature of expressing and communicating with a body and mind through movements in which each person has their personal ways of moving—kinds of movements that come from their own cultural or dance training background. Dance also provides the ability to look at and express oneself and to create

relationships with others—abilities that encourage the creation and experiencing of dance. By moving their bodies and discovering movements, dancers explore and experience bodily expressions in which feelings appear in a body through movements, without words or other tools. Movement research is the investigation of dance and movement-based forms connecting oneself, individuals, space, and time.

This thesis project as movement research values individual people and artists and strives to reflect the cultural, economic, and political diversity of our moving community. Homi Bhabha writes "we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion" (2004, p. 2). Dance is part of a culture that is a unique art form that unites knowledge, history, individuals, time, and space in discovering a physical communication that is as authentic as a body can transmit.

As a contemporary dance artist originally from Hiroshima, Japan, I was able to feel the impact of the war on my people and the country in Hiroshima where the atomic bomb was dropped during the Second World War. Looking at the land and history of Hiroshima, I have learned that people can cooperate and change the future with hope, even from the most painful experiences. As an immigrant, living in the city of Toronto with multinational people and cultures for several years, I have come to realize how multiculturalism exists on the ground. By living in both cities and encountering dance, I was able to connect with people through bodily movements. Through the experience of sharing each other's culture and history, my once painful experience and history turned into vitality for growth. By living in a multicultural city that is

Toronto and dancing with a diverse group of dance artists, I realized that it is possible to have a kind of hope towards shaping an ideal present and future through dance.

Canada has a rich dance community in which dance artists from various cultural backgrounds continue to create innovative contemporary dance works. In Toronto, I have been fortunate to have worked with various artists and dance companies, such as Ballet Creole, Kashe Dance Company, The Parahumans, Little Pear Garden Dance Company, The Toronto Blue Jays, and more. Looking back on my own experiences of working for and with them for about eleven years, by way of various dance performance experiences, choreographic practices, and training, it is incredible to realize how these embodied memories are now part of my own corporeal being as a Japanese Canadian.

Ballet Creole's Artistic Director, Patrick Parson, of Trinidadian heritage, focuses on creating dance works with Afro-Caribbean cultural roots and diaspora, interfacing with European dance traditions. "Diversity in Harmony" and "Creolization" are at the core of Parson's artistic vision. Kashe Dance Company's Artistic Director Kevin A. Ormsby, of Jamaican heritage, continues to create dance works with Afro-contemporary aesthetics drawn from ballet and modern but rooted in a dance of the diaspora where he now lives. "Human Expressions," "Poly-Rhythms," and "Technical Virtuosity" are instances of his artistic value. Little Pear Garden Dance Company (formerly Little Pear Garden Collective) led by Artistic Director, Emily Cheung, a choreographer and an educator of Chinese heritage, seeks to create dance works by developing a distinct voice in the opera and dance ecologies with contemporary artistic expressions rooted in Chinese traditions. Featuring new works that project honesty, passion, excellence, and integration, the company's vision is to build Chinese contemporary dance

vocabularies through creative and innovative works that will resonate strongly with the Chinese/ Canadian diaspora. The Parahumans with Artistic Director Dave Wilson, who originally hails from England, utilizes some of the concepts from Laban Movement Analysis. Their website states that their group "blends [with] contemporary dance techniques along with everyday actions, theatre, novel movements, and semi-structured performance presentations. This style also balances choreographic impulses derived from Body, Space, Dynamics, Relationships, as well as experimenting with the audience-performer connection."

Each dance company strives to create dance works that represent their own artistic values that incorporate their own cultural roots. As Barbara Sellers-Young states, "Inherent in the physical process of transmission are transformations of the implicit meaning of a form that are a consequence of individual histories and subjective identities" (2001, p. 136). Performing their dance repertories and delving into the meanings behind the movements that are culturally varied has produced in and through me, a hybrid form of the moving body. This hybrid and now diasporic body of mine has its own specific histories. Within a myriad information intervening through movements, a new identity as a contemporary dance artist has emerged in me that is creating my own individualistic expression and form.

My career as a dancer has been successful, but as a person and dance artist from Japan now living in Toronto, I have always felt a sense of loss of cultural identity in my own body. This thesis project, in both its written and creative choreographic output, is a way of having a conversation with that loss and perhaps to even recover and re-shape it according to my own contemporary reality.

Turning Point and Trigger

Among the choreographers I have mentioned, there is one significant dance production that influenced me to shape my choreographic goal and challenge: the contemporary dance piece called, *Facing Home: Love and Redemption*. This dance work was choreographed by Chris Walker, a Professor of Dance at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Kevin Ormsby, Artistic Director of Kashe Dance Company (Toronto). Both choreographers are originally from Jamaica. This one-hour, forty-five-minute contemporary dance production investigates the impact of Bob Marley's music in expressing humanity's struggle and its aspiration for love, redemption, and hope. It actively brings forth active issues of homophobia deeply rooted in Jamaica/West Indian culture.

Being part of this production involved developing the work and choreography that were incorporated with Jamaican folk dance and contemporary dance aesthetics, as well as performing and touring with them internationally for about five years. There was initially a slight struggle with embodying their cultural movements in my body because the movements were not natural or comfortable to me in relation to my previous dance training. By embodying the culturally rooted Jamaican folk dance choreography that emerged with contemporary dance style addressing issues of homophobia in Jamaica, I deeply felt the social, historical, and cultural contexts dialoging with my own body. The choreographic process was an intriguing experience, in terms of the approach to the movements as well as the history behind the movements. Moreover, the choreography tackled social issues that were brought together towards healing the pains of the past and bringing hope for positive change in the current moment and future. This was of a great interest to me. The title, "Facing Home" echoed the seeking of my own identity as

a dance artist with a fact that there is not a single dance piece of my creation which intentionally expresses my own Japanese cultural roots.

Although there are established Japanese Canadian dance artists and companies in Canada such as Fujiwara Dance Inventions (Toronto), Kokoro Dance Theatre Society (Vancouver), and Yayoi Theatre Movement Society (Vancouver), I realized upon searching for other Japanese dance artists and companies in Canada that there are not many new Japanese Canadian dance artists who create contemporary dance works in relation to the Japanese diaspora. My previous choreographic interest was focused on creating dance works with movements taken from ballet and modern dance vocabularies, and spurred by music and an architectural design of the dancing body. It never occurred to me that the curiosity of Japanese tradition, culture, and dance could emerge in me with contemporary aesthetics.

Because Japanese traditional dance has been established and authorized for a long time by the I*emoto* system, which will be explained in the next chapter, it is hard to make a change or to be creative, or to explore innovation with the style using contemporary dance practice. Dance and dance films are evolving in the traditional Japanese dance and theatre communities by collaborating with artists from other fields. However, it is rare to see the reverse due to the high respect for and the safeguarding of what is traditional in Japan. But as a Japanese Canadian contemporary artist, I seek for an emerging tradition that embodies respectfully a felt contemporary Japanese Canadian perspective.

Research Objective

My major question for this practiced-based thesis project is: What essence of Japanese traditional dance can dialogue with the contemporary dance forms? As Barbara Sellers-Young states, "One function of traditional or classical dance forms is as a powerful metaphor for the past, a site of memory" (2001, p. 136). Thus, I created the contemporary dance piece, *New Nostalgia* where I revisited an iconographic traditional Japanese dance called *The Wisteria Maiden* (*Fuji Musume/*藤娘 in Japanese) as a foundation of Japanese roots. Here, I employed contemporary aesthetics and movement vocabularies in the hopes of finding my own choreographic vocabulary and home within a contemporary dance form.

Traditional Japanese dance has a strong connection with music and lyrics. *The Wisteria Maiden* is a masterpiece in the traditional Japanese dance and *kabuki* dance. It was choreographed by Fujima Taisuke and first performed by Seki Sanjuro II at the Nakamura-za in Edo (current Tokyo) in 1826. The lyrics were written by Katsui Genpachi and the music was composed by Kineya Rokusaburô IV. Originally, there was a set of five different dance pieces to be performed as a sequence. *The Wisteria Maiden* was derived to be performed independently throughout the time among the five.

Many years later, through many revisions to the performance, the piece was created as a new version when it was staged in 1937. With this new version, the maiden became the spirit of the wisteria and this version is one of the most famous and popular versions in the traditional Japanese and kabuki dance repertoires today. Most of the traditional Japanese dance pieces have roots and been created in Japan. Because of the tradition and admiration for the masters of traditional Japanese and kabuki dancers/actors, it is difficult to re-choreograph or create a new

dance piece within the traditional dance form. However, after 77 years, this solo dance piece, *The Spirit of Wisteria* was re-choreographed as a duet in 2014. This new version was a sensation in the traditional Japanese dance scene. However, because the form and movements have remained in its tradition, it was not pervasive in Japanese dance culture as a whole.

Traditional Japanese dance has stayed with its traditional forms and aesthetics. Yet, people think that tradition is old-fashioned. Throughout history, *The Wisteria Maiden* was re-choreographed and transformed into a piece which is situated in each time of era, but still within its tradition. Moreover, the dance piece, *The Wisteria Maiden* is known by most of the Japanese people. However, this dance piece and its dance style are not as pervasive as other dance styles such as Butoh. While I live in Toronto, many people have mentioned Butoh to me as one of the Japanese dance genres; but *kabuki* dance and classical Japanese dance are rarely recognized in the dance community. By conducting the research on this particular piece, creating a contemporary dance work by being inspired by it, and dialoging with some of the elements as a choreographic tool from it, I hope to encourage more people to know this dance style, the history of Japanese dance culture, and its evolving aesthetics.

Methodology

As the traditional Japanese dance has a long history, I first conducted research on the history and the origin of the Japanese traditional dance/*kabuki* dance. After I researched on the history of this specific dance piece, *The Wisteria Maiden*, I then analyzed which qualities and elements could be derived from this dance work to apply to the choreographic process and exploration. The relationship of the dance form, how it evolved in the Japanese society and the

influence of a trend in the performing arts industry at that time in Japan in the field of dance, theatre, and film were introduced. As those aspects were influential to the work, *The Wisteria Maiden* unfolds the elements that could be the choreographic vocabulary to dialogue with this specific dance piece that has been re-choreographed and performed differently several times for about fifteen decades.

My research purpose was threefold: to revisit this traditional Japanese dance piece, *The Wisteria Maiden*; to incorporate some of the movements, qualities, and aesthetics as choreographic elements into a contemporary dance work; and to explore them by turning the solo piece into duet/group sections through careful movement observation. Moreover, I hoped to draw from movement vocabularies from contemporary dance aesthetics which are not originated in Japan with dancers as collaborators. In the university setting in Canada, most of the students are trained in ballet or modern dance forms. As collaborating with dancers from the York Dance Ensemble, the choreographic process also reflected the personal dance training of the members of this ensemble. Some of the members' personal movement vocabularies were also incorporated into choreography by using the choreographic elements extracted from *The Wisteria Maiden*. With my previous experiences, I generated all the movements that are used in the choreography. Thus, most of the choreographic movements came from my own body and aesthetics, and usually, the dancers needed to learn these choreographed movements from the choreographer that was me. However, in this thesis project, I gave my dancers to prompts to invite them to generate choreographic materials for *New Nostalgia*. This choreographic process was also an important in discovering how Canadian dancers could explore Japanese movement vocabularies in their bodies through the choreographic process.

This process was a mixture of interdisciplinary and intercultural work that hoped to find a synthesis of "a 'new' mode of being" (Sellers-Young, 2001, p.148) for me as a dance creator. Creating a contemporary dance work by integrating both traditional Japanese dance elements and contemporary dance aesthetics was what I hoped to achieve in my choreographic practice with this thesis research. Such a research goal was further supported by the additional historical academic research of internationally acclaimed Japanese artists such as Tatsumi Hijikata (Butoh), Tadashi Suzuki (theatre), and Akira Kurosawa (Film). I researched how these Japanese artists continued to seek their own methodologies, techniques and artistry while conducting their research and creating their works. Moreover, there was an introduction of how they continued to create in the intercultural circumstances such as mixing both Western and Eastern cultures in post-WWII Japan. Some discoveries from researching artists and their ways of expressing their arts through their art works during this specific time period assisted me in incorporating with traditional Japanese dance elements and contemporary dance aesthetics in my choreographic process and creation as part of the research. By researching and creating a contemporary dance work with Japanese traditional elements and movement aesthetics, I hoped to find my new identity that I can call 'Home' as a dance artist. Furthermore, through my choreography of *New Nostalgia*, I hope to encourage many people and a new generation to look at their own cultural roots from their own new, present-day perspectives.

Chapter 1: The Characteristics of *The Wisteria Maiden*

Reasons

There are three main reasons why the dance called *The Wisteria Maiden* (*Fuji Musume*) was chosen to be used and analyzed for my thesis project. Firstly, this dance work is iconic to both in classical Japanese dance and the *kabuki* production that has been performed since 1826, as a representation of the traditional Japanese dance on stage. It is not common to learn either *kabuki* or classical Japanese dance in school due to the limited number of teachers. To become a teacher of either *kabuki* or classical Japanese dance, people have to be born in a specific family or must follow the certain system called the I*emoto* system if they are born outside of a family to be certified to be able to teach. "The authority of the iemoto (also referred to as the sōke , 宗家) derives from being the primary successor by birth, adoption, or marriage to a family controlling an artistic dynasty with a distinct style (school or ryūgi, 流儀) of performance established by the family's founder" (Rath, 2016, p. 99). Thus, not many people in Japan practice both styles. However, Japanese traditional dance and many Japanese people who do not practice both dance styles can recognize or have seen this dance work.

Secondly, the fact that many people know this dance work ensures that it contains substantial elements that fascinate or mesmerize the audience as well as performers, resulting in a constant repetition of stage performances.

Thirdly, although its structure and interpretation have changed over 190 years, the choreography and composition are solidified, so that this dance work guarantees that it is being performed on stage, as close as it was at its inception. Based on these factors, this chapter

examines the characteristics of *The Wisteria Maiden* by introducing its history and aesthetics that comes from how *kabuki* and classical Japanese dance have evolved. Furthermore, essential movement vocabularies are introduced in Japanese dance with the research conducted in 2001 by Yoshimura, M., et al. who examined four fundamental movement vocabularies and forms in *The Wisteria Maiden* as a feature of Japanese dance to analyze its distinctiveness and dance skill. Finally, the potential choreographic elements are introduced in drawing creating a contemporary dance work.

A History of The *Wisteria Maiden*

> A poised young woman stands completely motionless, balancing a branch of wisteria flowers over one shoulder. With the twang of a shamisen (a three-stringed instrument akin to a guitar), her head rolls in a languid figure-eight and her arms carve delicate shapes through the air. Within these first few captivating moments of Fujimusume (Wisteria Maiden), it's clear why the 19th-century solo is arguably the most famous and popular work in nihon buyo-Japanese classical dance (Rolfe, 2018).

If anyone has seen *The Wisteria Maiden*, they would never forget the gorgeous stage sets, costumes, and subtleness of the dancer's movements. *Nagauta* (music assembling of *shamisen*, flute, drums, gongs, and singers) begins in the darkness and the dancer appears on the stage where the lighting instantly brightens. The stage has a large pine tree in the middle and countless wisteria flowers hang down from the ceiling. The dancer carrying a branch of a wisteria flower on her shoulder wears a bright and colourful kimono (*furisode*) in which wisteria flowers are also drawn on. The first impression of the dancer's appearance is absolutely mesmerizing with her dignified presence standing in the centre of the stage alongside the sophisticated details of

colourful stage sets, patterns and drawings of costumes, props, and musicians who play different musical instruments on stage.

As it was mentioned earlier, *The Wisteria Maiden (Fuji Musume)* was choreographed in 1826. Originally, this dance piece was performed in the *kabuki* production called *Kaesugaesu* (Repeatedly) *Onagori* (Aftermath) *Ōtsu-e* (Painting). There was a set of five different dance pieces in which a solo dancer changes into five different characters coming out from a painting all danced as a sequence. The inspiration for this dance was originally drawn by *Ōtsu-e* as a souvenir tourist painting for travellers passing around Lake Biwa (near Kyoto) during the Edo period (1603-1868). The *Ōtsu-e* painting of the wisteria maiden is regarded as a talisman of "good luck," it is a symbol that brings good fortune to people. At the premiere, *The Wisteria Maiden* was performed the way that the lady of a wisteria came out from the *Ōtsu-e* painting and begun to dance. After a few years, the part of *The Wisteria Maiden* is now performed independently without other dance pieces.

Many years later, through many revisions to the performance, the piece was created as a new version by Onoe Kikugorô VI and staged in 1937. With this new version, the maiden became the spirit of the wisteria and he inserted the new *Nagauta* song called *Fujiondo* (藤音頭) composed by Tarou Oni. On stage, there is the big pine tree in the centre entangled by wisteria flowers. The pine symbolizes a man and the wisteria symbolizes a woman. The basic storyline is that the wisteria spirit holds a wisteria branch in front of a large pine tree entwined with wisteria dances while mourning the unwilling man's heart. Eventually, while she gets drunk and is dancing, the bell rings and it tells the time of the dusk. The wisteria maiden disappears at dusk.

This version became one of the most famous and popular versions in the classical Japanese and *kabuki* repertoire today.

The figure of the wisteria maiden is also used in many Japanese dolls and battledores. Hideo Furuido notes that with the addition of new productions, some have been handed down to this day, while others have unfortunately disappeared (1990). In terms of the charm that *Fuji Musume (The Wisteria Maiden)* was left as a classic, one major charm of *Fuji Musume* is the attraction of the daughter (dancer) who appeared on the stage. This girl wears a hat and carries wisteria flowers on her shoulders and stands in the middle of the stage with a dignified personality. The pattern of the kimono is full of wisteria flowers, which is a very flashy decoration, and it is normal to take off one sleeve. This is because the girl with such characteristics is based on the picture called *Ōtsu-e*, and that special figure is one of the basics that has supported "*Fuji Musume*" as a classic (Furuido, 1990, p. 35-36). There is also the recent choreographic version that Bandō Tamasaburō V, known as the most famous celebrated *Onnagata* (female role) *kabuki* actor, who re-choreographed it into a duet in 2014.

Essences of *The Wisteria Maiden*

In this piece, the colour of the wisteria is always purple although there are many other colours. The colour purple refers to the city of Edo (current Tokyo). There is a colour called *Edo Murasaki* (Edo purple) and this dark bluish purple represents the vibrant city of Edo. As *The Wisteria Maiden* was first performed in Edo, the beautiful stage in full bloom with purple wisteria symbolized Edo with full vigor. Moreover, the dancer carries the full bloomed purple

wisteria flower branch and sometime hugs it in the beginning. The purple is also called *Yukarino Iro* (colour of connection) which implies someone who is related or loved.

In analyzing *The Wisteria Maiden*, the relationship between dance choreography and music lyrics is indispensable. In creating the contemporary dance work, my main focus is the movements not the music or ethnomusicology, the elements introduced in this section may not be directly included in the creative elements of the contemporary dance work. However, since it is an important part of *The Wisteria Maiden*'s dance work, I would like to mention the essential element between music and choreography. There is no specific storyline besides the basic narrative of the maiden mourning the unwilling man's heart and the core attraction is the characterization of an innocent, shy, easily embarrassed young maiden expressing her feelings in this almost twenty-minute solo.

Most of the choreography expresses the lyrics sung in music with dance. Many of the movements are not only dances, but also include mimes to embody the lyrics with movements as well as with many other props such as hats, fans, strings, the branch of wisteria flowers, and even the sleeves of kimono becoming a prop to express the lyrics by miming. For example, there is a section called *Kudoki* in which she expresses her love to the man. With the lyric, “To Ishiyama with a firm oath (かたい誓いの石山に)”, she brings her hat with red strings attached to it and tightens two red strings to show a solemn promise that wishes that she and her lover are connected by love. Furthermore, in the middle of the piece, when the maiden appears to bow to the audience, after the bow the song starts with the lyric, “The wisteria flower cluster is colourful and long (藤の花房　いろよく長く)”. The dancer who is a spirit of wisteria holds the both sleeves of the kimono which have a gorgeous pattern of wisteria flowers and dances. She titles

the body as if to represent the cluster of wisteria and she, herself becomes the flower and plant. The next lyric is, “To adore it (which is a wisteria flower), I bought a bottle of sake (Japanese rice wine) and let it drink (可愛がろとて　酒買うて　のませたら)”. She grabs one sleeve to make it look like a bottle and makes a gesture of pouring a sake. Then, she brings the other sleeve that becomes a sake glass and she attempts to accept it, but she makes another gesture of pouring a glass of sake for an imaginary man.

As described previously, the choreography and movements embody the lyrics and the music, and movements that have a strong connection in this piece. Another important element of the choreography of *The Wisteria Maiden* was the research around the use of props. Many props are used to employ the embodiment of the lyrics with movements. This dance work was first performed in the *kabuki* production and it has a particular style of performance on stage using a magnificent stage set, props, and costumes to keep attracting audiences and maintaining its traditional style. In the next section, some of the historical contexts and the aesthetics are introduced as part of the main characteristics of *The Wisteria Maiden* as choreographic elements for this thesis research and creation.

A Brief History of Kabuki

Word Derivation

Although *The Wisteria Maiden* is one of the well-known pieces in the *Nihonbuyo* (classical Japanese dance) repertoires, this dance piece was first performed as a *kabuki* (Japanese Traditional Theatre) production. *Kabuki* (歌舞伎) contains three k*anji* (Chinese character) characters: Ka (歌) means Sing; Bu (舞) means Dance; Ki (伎) means Skill (Iezzi, 2016). All of

those three elements denote what this traditional performing art form, *kabuki* is today. With the traditional form of *kabuki* in contemporary Japan, it is known that all the *kabuki* performers are males. Iezzi notes, "Most kabuki actors specialize in either male roles (tachiyaku) or female roles (onnagata), further subdivided according to age, occupation, and nature (positive, negative, comic, etc.).

The late eighteenth century saw a rise of virtuosic actors (*kaneru yakusha*) who could play a wide variety of both male and female roles" (2016, p. 108). There is a fascinating story behind how *kabuki* became its current name and form: "Originally written in the phonetic syllabary (hiragana), referencing the 'deviant' or 'leaning' kabukimono, the term was later written with three kanji characters, ka (歌 song), bu (舞 dance) and ki (妓 prostitute), later changed to ki (伎) [skill]" (Iezzi, 2016, p. 111). Stemming from this arises the question: Why was there a word describing "prostitute" in its name previously and what is "*kabukimono*"? The name of the *kabuki* (not the Kanji characters) came from the gesture of *kabuku* (傾く); a noun of the conjunctive form of "tilt". Kabu of k*abuku* is said to be the old name of a head, and the original meaning was tilting a head. Therefore, *kabuki* has become a word that expresses an unconventional or strange style in the sense that it takes the action of tilting its head when you see something or someone strange. From this origin, it came to refer to the fact that the style and behaviour are ravishing and to depict behaving in a colourful manner. The one who behaves like that is called *kabukimono*. It became a popular slang term in Tenshou era (1573-1592) that indicates the aesthetic trend of that era.

Kabuki's Derivation

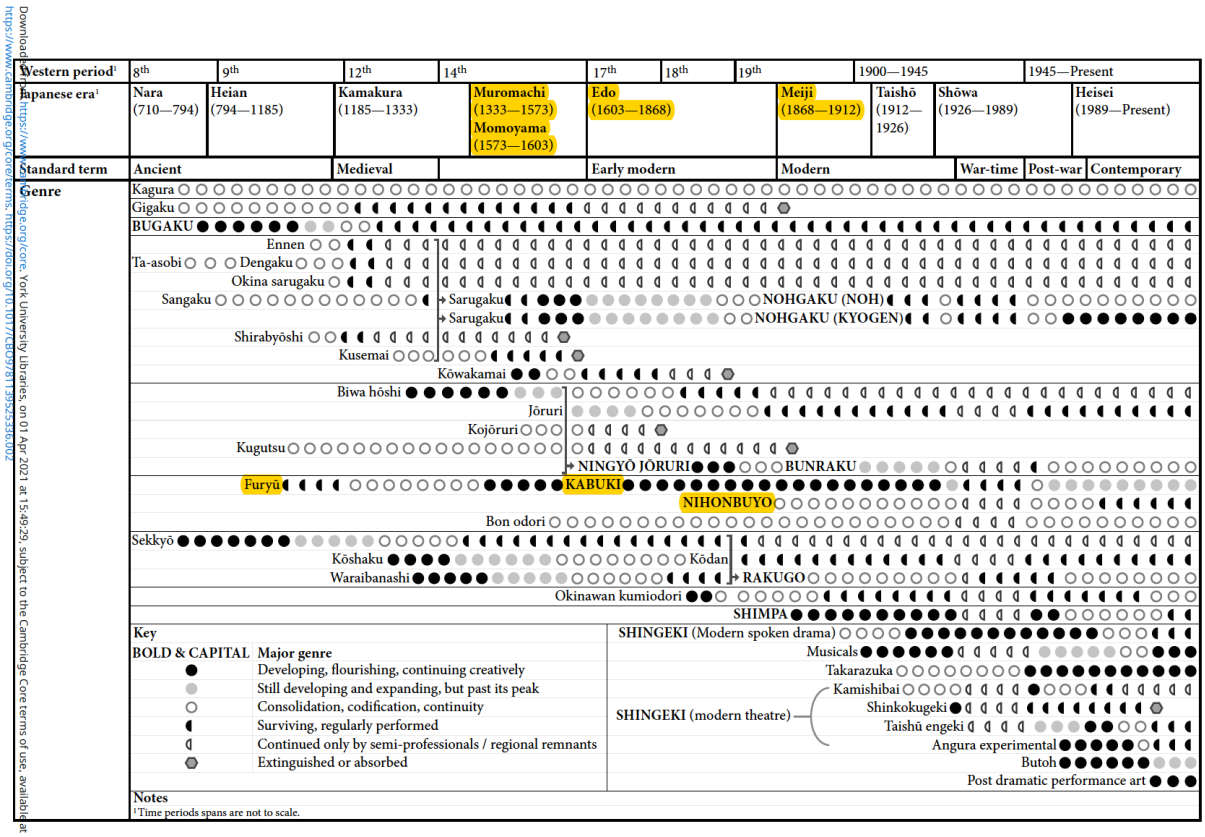

Figure 1: Jonah Salz. "Timetable by Rachel Payne". A History of Japanese Theatre. 2016.

For the clarity in historical details, the timetable chart above from *A History of Japanese Theatres* shows how *kabuki*'s aesthetic evolved from f*uryu* (風流) dance which was a popular dance style since the Heian era especially in the Muromachi (1333-1573) and the Azuchi-Momoyama (1333-1603) era. In *furyu* dance, people wore various colourful costumes and masquerade costumes and they danced in groups with the accompaniment of Japanese bells, flute, and drums called Hayashi. Hashidate Ayako, a researcher of traditional Japanese performing arts, talks about the style of *furyu* in her research by paraphrasing information from a kabuki researcher, Yukio Hattori. She mentions that "f*uryu*" comes from the aesthetics of

elegance and grace (2003). It became a term that refers to the phenomenon in which people dressed in gorgeous costumes, mainly fake, danced in a line and a circle with the musician and musical accompaniments (2012).

A typical example of the *furyu* dance style included the use of a huge umbrella with flowers, dolls and many decorations in the center, people wore gorgeous costumes, and fans held by dancers moving enthusiastically in a circle around a huge umbrella. Hashidate also mentioned that Hattori assumes that there is a reason why this style of dance became popular. The Azuchi-Momoyama period was the final phase of the dreadful Sengoku period. Many people suffered from the domestic war at that time caused by shoguns and samurais. Hattori believes that underneath the elegant costumes, sense of extravaganza, and an unrealistic corporeal appearance, this dance was also an event to pacify many spirits who died, unemployed in the postwar turbulent world. The dancers danced together to comfort God, sooth the wrath of the dead, eliminate natural disasters and epidemics, and protect their daily happiness (2003). Not only *kabuki* but the *furyu* dance also influenced the source of folk performing arts such as *nenbutsu odori* (dance), rain-making dance, Bon festival dance, and lion dance. These aesthetics of being elegant, strange, colourful, enthusiastic, and spectacle, are the primary elements of a fundamental aesthetic of *kabuki*.

Trajectory of Kabuki's Establishment

> Traditional kabuki is presentational, every effort being made to show actions outwardly to the audience in a conscious and beautiful manner. Regardless of the specific character or circumstance portrayed, every aspect of performance strives for visual beauty. This ranges from the overall set construction or large-scale tableaux (group poses), down to

> the smallest details of costume and properties, and each movement and gesture (Griffith & Okada, 2006, p. 146).

As mentioned earlier, in contemporary Japan, *kabuki* is known as an art form of dance and drama dominantly performed by male performers on stage. However, the person who originated *kabuki* in 1603 was a female dancer called Okuni. She served as a shrine maiden who performed Buddhist and Shinto dances called *Nembutsu Odori/Prayers' Dance* (Michaelis, 1977). She primarily toured to perform dances to collect contributions for the shrine. However, her performance became popular and she started to choreograph a new style and taught it to other female performers.

At that time, when Okuni was on a tour, this aesthetic of *kabuku* (dressing strangely) and *furyu* style dance were popular in Japan. One of her innovative dance creations, she called K*abuki Odori*. Iezzi notes:

> Odori' refers to an energetic dance in which the feet lift high off the ground. Indeed, the postures and positions of reveling dancers depicted in late sixteenth-century circular nembutsu dances, and depictions of Okuni and women's kabuki in the early seventeenth century, indicate an erotic body expression sharply contrasting with the grounded gliding steps of *mai*, the dance of no and kyogen (Iezzi, 2016, p.111).

Okuni wore a big sword that seems to be at the same height as herself. Defining herself, dressed as a man, it refers to the aesthetic of *kabuku/kabukimono* expressing an unconventional or strange style of being. By incorporating the aesthetic of *kabukimono*, she became an artist and a symbol of worship like a god that transcends gender.

The way that Okuni performed dance was eccentric and this avant-garde style of dance became popular and famous by being praised as a beautifully colourful extraordinary performance in its appearance. Her group was exclusively female and this was the beginning of

Onnakabuki (Female *kabuki*). Her group also started playing both male and female roles in the performance. This style of playing both gender roles maintains the style of current *kabuki*.

Many other female dancers imitated Okuni's performance style. From 1467 to 1615, Japan was in the era of a civil war period (Sengoku Period) when samurais and shoguns were fighting to invade each other's territories. The dance performance was perhaps used to ease tension or escape from the reality of the severe time and memories. Her dance performance and style were well received by shoguns and high-ranking samurais and it became more and more popular for audiences, as well as performers. However, many of the women turned out to become prostitutes and as dancers, they danced in the daytime to attract male customers for the night. (Michaelis, 1977).

The government thus concerned about morals and once banned *kabuki* in 1629 by the time of Tokugawa Shogunate (Dallas, 2010). After the prohibition, women were replaced by young teenage boys to perform *kabuki*. However, this was also later banned in 1652. In 1653, as a third reformation, *Yaro Kabuki* (Male Kabuki) was invented that is "the forerunner of the present-day Kabuki" (Michaelis, 1977, p. 83). Since then, the style of *kabuki* played only by adult male performers was established and all the male performers performing both female and male characters in Kabuki repertories became common as one of the prestigious Japanese traditional performing arts. Although there were many failures, people then were not afraid to try new things and be creative to continue experimenting, creating, and performing. They took in various approaches and aesthetics that were popular in society back then and established their own style of dance, performing arts and an art form in their own way. Therefore, they are

establishing a “place-making” for performers and creators despite government policy; it has since become a tradition continuing to be performed for over four hundred years.

Classical Japanese Dance

Even though in *kabuki*, *The Wisteria Maiden* is performed by only male performers, it is also performed in n*ihonbuyo* (classical Japanese dance) productions. As Paul Griffith and Mariko Okada note, “The majority of dances in the nihonbuyo repertoire derive from kabuki performance, adhering to the same aesthetic principals” (2006, p. 146). *Nihonbuyo* was derived from *kabuki* in the early 19th century. “While nihonbuyo shares kabuki’s dance repertoire, it has nonetheless developed a distinct identity” (Griffith & Okada, 2006, p. 146). In k*abuki,* only male actors and dancers are allowed to perform. Although classical Japanese dance was derived from *kabuki*, in classical Japanese dance, both men and women can learn and perform dance works that were originated from *kabuki*.

In contemporary Japan, classical Japanese dance is not only danced to learn movements and dance repertories but also to learn certain discipline and matters through the dance practice. When people dance classical Japanese dance, they usually wear a kimono or *yukata* that is a traditional attire. However, many Japanese people nowadays do not know how to wear a kimono because the way of living is Westernized and most people wear dresses, T-shirts, pants and so on especially after the Second World War. Therefore, people first must learn how to wear a kimono by taking lessons. When a kimono is worn during class, movements become restricted because it wraps about the body and the feet would not be able to be opened widely. Thus, the restriction helps to generate refined and confined movements, so the way of moving changes from the ordinary way of moving throughout the lesson. To start the lesson, students sit and bow to the

teacher. When they sit down, they have to take a time to sit quietly and beautifully in a way thinking of a balance of the wholeness of the body by wearing the kimono. Classical Japanese dance is a way to re-visit Japanese culture by embodying it, and to know how people in the past used to live and behave.

Although it was said that *nihonbuyo* was derived from *kabuki, nihonbuyo* contains the similar movement aesthetics from other Japanese folk and traditional dance. This aesthetic comes from an agricultural culture and influenced the result of the mixture of trends of things that symbolized each era or people's needs. Thus, as a result, tradition is a testament to the hybridity of the evolution of what happened and what was needed at the time, sometimes removing what was not needed in the historical and cultural contexts. Griffith and Okada notes:

> Nihonbuyo inherits movement styles from older dance forms derived from shrine, court, and folk dance. These may be analyzed as mai (circular), odori (leaping), and furi (mime). The word mai comes from the verb mau (舞う), a contraction of mawaru (to rotate), signifying slow and deliberate circling movements. The body is held stiffly, the center of gravity low, knees bent slightly, while the soles of the feet are in continuous contact with the floor (suriashi). This strong relationship between dancer and floor is further emphasized by occasional stamping. The origins of mai can be traced back to the earliest forms of *miko kagura* in which shrine priestesses circle around to reach a state of trance, as well as *bugaku*, the stately court dance imported from China. *Mai* became the principal movement style in the noh theatre, appropriating popular *kusemai* in Kan'ami's time, then subsequently exerted a major influence on popular kabuki dance. Odori (踊り) refers to a much looser kind of leaping movement in which the body breaks away from such earthbound constrictions. The arms swing more freely, the body jumps, and the movements are faster and lighter than mai, more tightly linked with the melody and livelier rhythms of musical accompaniment. This style of movement may also stem from the practice of miko kagura performers who leapt, perhaps, as [an] inducement to possession. Odori was later popularized with the stamping and rhythmic body movements of nenbutsu odori (Buddhist prayer dance), established by the priest Kūya

(903–72), and later by colorful group furyū odori in the 1400s and 1500s (2006, p. 141-142).

Classical Japanese dance is a hybrid art form as a tradition and also a tool to acquire the beauty of movements that have been passed down for nearly hundreds of years, defined behaviours, and Japanese aesthetics through movements.

Goals and Potential Choreographic Elements

While researching some of the historical contexts of *The Wisteria Maiden* which is performed in both *kabuki* and classical Japanese dance, I found that there were key aesthetics of elegance, colour, and grace, and being strange and unrealistic in its form and presentation. Those aesthetics were incorporated in a dialogue with the creation process of my contemporary dance making. Finding these aesthetics was an intriguing journey to reveal influences and links to other Japanese dance styles and forms. Moreover, knowing varied aesthetics, it was helpful to imagine the atmosphere and space that I was trying to create when I presented my final thesis creation on stage.

In this section, I would like to talk about movements that can be a feature of Japanese Dance. In my research I incorporated the findings in *Qualification of Characteristic Features of Japanese Dance for individuality Recognition* by Mitsu Yoshimura, Nario Mine, Kamiko Kai, and Isao Oshimura. They utilized this dance piece, *The Wisteria Maiden* to capture the fundamental movements and characteristic features of Japanese Dance on dancers digitally with motion capture. The purpose of this research was to identify the personal skills from beginners to experts digitally on computer. In conducting this research, they focused on looking at four essential movements in this dance work, *The Wisteria Maiden* to evaluate distinctiveness and

dance skills: “kamae, jyu-shin, koshi, and uchiwa which are essential features in Japanese dance” (Yoshimura, M., et al., 2001, p. 191).

Kamae is a pause. This pause is used before a dancer starts moving or a dancer takes a pause between movements. As a basic *kamae*, this pause has a certain body structure. The spine is straight as if you are hanging from the ceiling; feet are placed together; hands are slightly in front of your body and make a circle with both arms with slightly bent elbows. In ballet terms, it looks like the arm position of *En Bas*. Hands make gentle fists with a thumb’s finger attaching to an index finger. This allows you to adjust your posture and connect to the next movement by taking some time before or between movements, so “[W]ith a stable *kamae* provides the audience a stout and composed impression” (Yoshimura, M., et al, 2001, p. 189).

Ju-shin is a centre of gravity meaning lowering a centre of gravity. In most of the movements in this dance work, dancer’s movements are delicate and effortless while moving through space. The movements are sustained and a dancer often uses the technique of Suriashi (gliding feet) in order to move smoothly in space and on the floor. To move smoothly on the floor and in space, this *Ju-shin*/lowering a centre of gravity is essential. Dancers practice this fundamental movement to improve their dance and apply it to enhance their performance skills. Thus, the importance of, “A low centre of gravity which requires discipline and in-depth training” (Yoshimura, M., et al, 2001, p. 190).

In the direct translation, *koshi* is hip, meaning a centre of gravity does not move from side to side, and hip and waist are stable. This indicates that the sustainability of a body is important and that a body is not wobbling while dancing. “[T]he pelvic is parallel to the ground with no reclining” (Yoshimura, M., et al, 2001, p. 190).

And u*chiwa* is turned-in feet. This also "indicates in-ward bent knees regarded as a characteristic virtue of women in times past. It is important to mention that due to the depth of Japanese culture this corresponds to about four hundred years ago" (Yoshimura, M., et al, 2001, p. 190). According to the research, those four elements are fundamental movement forms that are essential to the characteristic feature of Japanese dance and *The Wisteria Maiden*. Therefore, I incorporated those Japanese dance elements in exploring and seeking my choreographic voice in the process of contemporary dance creation.

Chapter 2: Japanese Aesthetics and Hybridity: Elements of Revolutionized Japanese Elements in Dance, Theatre and Film

Challenges of Hybridity in Japan

In the previous chapter, it was mentioned that classical Japanese dance is an example of the result of hybrid art forms. In general, many traditional performing arts often contain a hybrid of various elements. Thus, the evolution of many of the traditional art forms are influenced by various social, political, and historical aspects before the establishment. After the establishment and the introduction of the *iemoto* system, it has become difficult to create new types of dances and works that incorporate new styles and challenges with a hybrid of Japanese elements in the traditional performing arts such as *kabuki* and classical Japanese dance as well as contemporary dance in Japan. Griffith and Okada note,

> Tsubouchi's aforementioned coinage of nihonbuyo was employed in arguing for a new type of musical dance-drama, a national dance reflecting the modern Japanese state; his Shinkyoku Urashima (New Urashima, presented in fragments from 1904) was a model. Yet the "new dance" movement that he envisaged, of folk tales and legends dramatized through connected scenes of physical expression, and employing any number of Japanese and Western musical styles, never proved as successful as the traditional repertoire. Fujima Shizue (later Fujikage Seiju, 1880–1966) quit the geisha world in 1919 to devote herself to improving Japanese dance by creating original dances, becoming the first professional dancer outside the entertainment district. A few kabuki actors attempted modern choreographies, some influenced by Russian ballet. However, the separation of dance from the stage, and new choreographies by non-iemoto performers, met with harsh criticism, making such innovations difficult. The Nihonbuyō Kyōkai (Japanese Dance Association, 1930) stressed its roots in ancient ritual and classical theatre; the Intangible Cultural Properties laws of 1949–51 sought to fix nihonbuyo's repertoire to the established kabuki dances. Tourists visiting for the 1964 Olympics and 1970 Expo were entertained by pure Japanese

> culture, not a hybrid with Western instruments or modern dance. The conservative iemoto system of schools and hierarchies, and their fans, succeeded in preserving traditions, yet at the high cost of losing out on much innovation (2016).

Thus, it seems that innovative dance works of hybrid forms of Japanese elements and other forms of dance or art have had a challenge in becoming successful in Japan. However, in this chapter, by introducing the research of the successful artists who have influenced the world beyond Japan in the fields of dance (Tatsumi Hijikata/Butoh), theatre (Tadashi Suzuki/Suzuki Method), and film (Akira Kurosawa), I argue to clarify some of the elements behind the success of establishing new expressions, techniques, and forms while taking the elements of Japaneseness and how those Japanese elements were incorporated in their works. Furthermore, those discoveries have been reflected in the research of my treatise and the final thesis creation.

Butoh: Dance of Darkness and Light

Butoh (舞踏) is one of the most famous and pervasive Japanese contemporary dance forms in the world. While working in Toronto and touring overseas, I have met many dance artists mentioning Butoh as a Japanese dance style that they acknowledge was originally from Japan. Thus, I realized that the dance style and the word of Butoh is an entrenched knowledge as one of the Japanese dance genres among the international dance community. It is surprising that compared to the ubiquity of Butoh in the global dance community, traditional Japanese dance such as classical Japanese dance and *kabuki* are not well-known or as prevalent as Butoh.

This section introduces some of the basic core elements of Butoh as Hijikata and Ono have evolved over the course of about thirty years which is described as the first Japanese

modern/contemporary dance; although I have to mention that this dance form, Butoh is still evolving today. While denying, accepting, and reflecting what happened in Japanese society, history, and the dance community, Butoh choreographers and dancers have built a new world of dance that unravels some cultural roots of Japan. By revealing a new expression, methods, and approaches to the dance creation and performances that Butoh has developed, it can be said that Butoh is a fine example of how Japaneseness could be successfully dialogued or perhaps artfully denied to create a new expression of dance.

Tatsumi Hijikata is one of the founders and pioneers of Butoh and Japanese contemporary dance. His style became known as *Ankokuboto* (暗黒舞踏), meaning "dance of darkness". It was later abbreviated as "butoh". The form was built on a vocabulary of "crude physical gestures and uncouth habits... a direct assault on the refinement (*miyabi*) and understatement (*shibui*) so valued in Japanese aesthetics" (Sanders, 1988, p.194). His new expression of dance was rather totally opposite of what the typical Japanese beauty and aesthetic are compared to gorgeous and spectacular performance and beauty in the traditional Japanese dance and theatre such as k*abuki* and the classical Japanese dance or any dance genres that are structured by patterns and forms such as ballet and modern dance.

According to Bruce Baird who is a researcher in Japanese dance, performance, philosophy, and Butoh, Hijikata is known as a trained dancer with ballet, flamenco, jazz, tap, and German Expressionism (Baird, 2006). He had intended to pursue a professional dance career; however this was completely altered by the historical events of World War II when the United States dropped the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Vicki Sanders notes, "He came of age as a dancer and choreographer, however, at a time when his country lay in ruins,

when there was an opportunity to change a rigid class structure, to throw off the mantle of Westernism, to rediscover and redefine what it meant to be Japanese" (1988, p. 148).

One of Hijikata's first works, *Forbidden Colors (Kinjiki/*禁色) was presented in 1959. This performance shocked many audiences in Japan in not the most pleasant way. After he performed his first dance work, he was expelled as a performer from the Japanese Modern Association (Baird, 2012). However, despite being expelled from the association, Bruce Baird notes:

> One of the side effects of over-sensationalizing this performance is that we can be fooled into thinking that Hijikata was unique—that he was the only one trying to do something new—and this notion might lead one to disconnect Hijikata from his historical context. He was, in fact, a product of his times (2012).

It is undeniable that he was trying to do something new. He also began some of the experimental works such as *Stand*, in which he would take a few minutes or hours to just stand up (Baird, 2012). In tandem with his continued experimentation, he created dance pieces and performances such as *Hijikata Tatsumi DANCE EXPERIENCE Gathering (1961), Masseur: A Story of a Theatre that Sustains Passion (1963), Rose-Colored Dance (1965), Metemotionalphysics (1967), Hijikata Tatsumi and Japanese People: Rebellion of the Body (1968)*. Hijikata had a successful career as a modern dancer in Japan and he performed on stage, in TV shows, and movies. Before he formally debuted and presented the first work, *Forbidden Colors*, he choreographed a section of a solo called "Stillness and Motion" in a dance piece called *Dance of the Burial Mound Figurine* (Bairds, 2012). As recognizing the title of a section he choreographed, he had the intention of an interest in exploring "oppositions". Baird

acknowledges as one of the core concepts of Butoh using opposition — “Practitioners today may be distinguished according to where they fall along several artistic fault lines: improvisation versus tightly structured dance; spectacle versus minimalism; and emotion and sensation versus meaning–appended quite arbitrarily to movement or emerging organically” (2016, p. 324).

I argue that this aesthetic of using opposition may come from the idea of doing something completely opposite of what typical Japanese beauty is in traditional Japanese dance in which elegance and spectacular beauty and gorgeousness are the core of the presentation. Hijikata’s expression is an inverse of this aesthetic: grotesque, dark, and ugly. However, it could be said that his expression is a true beauty of expression of the humankind and truth without any decorated artificial expression of beauty coming from within not from without.

At the same time, Ohno Kazuo (1906-2010), who is another key founder of Butoh began performing abroad, extensively in Europe and the United States (Baird, 2016). In the late 1960s, Ohno started to collaborate with Hijikata at age of 71. According to Baird, he performed one of the famous *Butoh* dance pieces of Ono’s, *Admiring La Argentina* (1977). “It reprised Hijikata’s dance *Forbidden Colors* (1960, revised version), to which Ohno added his own choreography, including scenes from his daily life as a janitor and homage to flamenco dancer Antonia Mercy Luque. This dance catapulted Ohno to worldwide fame when he presented it at the Avignon Festival in 1980” (Baird, 2016, p. 324).

From those two influential Butoh founders, Hijikata Tatsumi and Kazuo Ono, other dancers began to be inspired by their aesthetics and methods of Butoh in their performances and creations. One of the established well-known artist duos who is based in New York City is Eiko and Koma. They both studied with Hijikata and Ono in the 1970s. Sanders notes, “Hijikata's aim

was to startle an unyielding, class-conscious Japan into recognizing the presence of its outcasts, its so-called nonpeople" (1988, p. 148). Butoh is known to be performed and trained with high-controlled movements, strong concentration, and imagery work to transform. Eiko and Koma do not call themselves Butoh dancers. However, their works are usually inspired by using the idea of "nonpeople" and imagery work. Alan M. Kriegsman who is an American dance critic describes their performance as "This is how they experience dance: When we perform, we like to imagine that each of us is a fresh fish which was just caught and is on the cutting board. The fish intuits that somebody will eat it. No room to be coquettish. The fish's body is tight, shining blue, eyes wide open. No way to escape" (1985, B14). Moreover, Eiko and Koma's dance performances and works focus on movements with time, stillness, and space as well as a concept that human beings are part of nature. They do not only utilize theatre spaces, but they also present site-specific works and outdoor performances such as Land (1991), Wind (1993), River (1997), When Night Were Dark (2000), Be With (2001), and Mourning (2007).

By imagining and empathizing with one of their concepts, becoming something that is not a human being, such as the water of a river or a fish in a river, they project a vulnerability of the human body with movements and emotions that give the audience something to sympathize with. From their creations inspired by the Butoh aesthetic, they empathize with the Eastern/ Japanese philosophy. Sanders notes:

> Their viewpoint is reminiscent of the traditional Japanese aesthetic concept of *mono no aware*, the sorrow-tinged appreciation of transitory beauty, so idealized in the art of the Heian period (794-1185), and particularly in *The Tale of Genji (Genji monogatari)* of Murasaki Shikibu. Butō also accepts and appreciates the transitory, but denies without apology that pretty things are the proprietary symbols of impermanence (1988, p. 150).

As mentioned earlier, Butoh had evolved over the thirty years. Although Hijikata was trying to create something new and kept presenting the work in Japan in the 1950s and 1960s, it was never as successful as when he began performing abroad in the 1970s and 1980s with Ono Kazuo. The same is true for Eiko and Koma who moved to New York City and to create and present their dance works. I argue that performing abroad as Japanese dance artists and performing the new form of dance that was unique and opposite to Western culture dance forms made Butoh rather more Japanese.

Hijitaka and other Butoh dancers were not intentionally incorporating a root of Japanese identity. They were trying something new that is the opposite of typical Japanese beauty and Westernism. Consequently, the chaotic circumstances of the postwar era in the 1960s resulted in Japanese dance artists attempting to create something new after everything was destroyed by the war. I assume this is why their Japanese roots and identity naturally came into play in their choreographic works. Baird notes, "Butoh has also been influential in shaping a generation of contemporary dance performers oriented to concentration, distillation, and use of body parts in isolation to express potent and disturbing images" (2016, p. 325). All of those influences combine to find Japanese elements in *Butoh. A*lthough Hijikata may not intentionally incorporate Japanese elements, such elements might be found to be similar to traditional Japanese performing art, n*oh* and k*abuki*. According to Sanders:

> During its thirty years of evolution, Butō has undergone many changes. Among them [have] been tempering of its grotesquerie, making the dance somewhat more palatable to both Japanese and foreign audiences. In fact, much of the current choreography displays lyricism, gentleness, humour, and even an occasional sign of playfulness, a queasily notably found in the dances of the troupes Dai Rakudakan and Bykkosha. Butō retains many of the qualities of darkness instilled by its originator. These

> characteristics have by now formed themselves into an aesthetic, making it possible to examine the dance in relation to traditional Japanese art and philosophy (1988, p. 149).

One of the aspects of being successful in establishing a new Japanese contemporary dance form such as is Butoh, I argue, is that artists needed to go out of Japan to present their works overseas. Leaving their country of origin is recognized as unique or different from other countries and cultures. This uniqueness and difference was not as much appreciated as in Japan compared to the reaction abroad. By performing Butoh works overseas, Japaneseness and the "Orient" are emphasized as elements of this dance style. The fact that Butoh was invented by Japanese dance artists who were born in Japan, experienced the horrific situation with the atomic bombing, and were trying to find something new to find their voice and existence in their dance creation. According to Sanders, as he paraphrases Donald Richie, he notes:

> It is impossible to imagine butō having emerged in any nation but Japan. The dance is wholeheartedly oriental, from its squat-bodied movement idiom to its spirituality, from its post-Hiroshima rebelliousness to its present-day codification. Having rejected Western forms and many of Japan's refined aesthetic qualities as restrictive and irrelevant, founder Hijikata set about inventing his own art based on refinement's opposites: crudeness, vulgarity, commonness. Yet judging from the reaction of Western critics, it would seem that, despite Hijikata's intentions, traditional Japanese aesthetics are not absent in but, but the awareness of human fragility in an age of nuclear weapons and social decay (1988, p. 161&162).

The goal of this thesis project is to dialogue with elements of traditional Japanese dance with the contemporary choreography. It seems that Butoh has achieved this goal unintentionally during the thirty years of evolution. By being born in Hiroshima and spending my life for about twenty years in Japan, I may naturally have a uniquely Japanese way of thinking or reflect my Japanese roots in my embodiment of movement. Without forgetting this, I will not be distracted

by the choreography that result in forms and movements, but I will listen to my inner voice, and mix the embodied movements and emotions that spring out of it into the thesis research and creation.

Suzuki Method: Fusion of Japanese and Western Theatre

Butoh may not be a perfect example of the hybridity of Japanese elements and other forms. However, Hijitaka, Ono, and other Butoh performers have established and introduced new revolutionized Japaneseness in dance that is opposite of what the typical Japanese beauty is to the world. In the era when Hijikata had established Butoh for about thirty years from the 1950s to the 1980s, there was another person in the theatre world who was searching for a new way and form of creating theatre productions fusing Western theatre plays by using aesthetics of Japanese traditional performing arts. His name is Tadashi Suzuki. According to Yukihiro Goto who is an expert of Asian theatre techniques such as k*abuki*, n*oh, Butoh*, and Suzuki said, "I want to have my own particular forms and words" (1989, p. 103). Since then, he became one of the most innovative theatre directors and is a founder of the Suzuki Method that has influenced theatre practitioners around the world.

His first notable successful production was *On the Dramatic Passions II (Gekiteki naru mono o megutte II*) in which there are extracted scenes from the Tsuruya Namboku IV's *Kabuki* plays to Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* in 1970 (Goto, 1989). In the article of *The Theatrical Fusion of Suzuki Tadashi* written by Yukihiro Goto, he focuses on analyzing Suzuki's productions reframing European classic plays with a Japanese theatrical formula that creates "a unique synthesis of Japanese form with Western/modern context" (1989, p. 103). According to

Goto, Suzuki was exploring ideas and techniques from traditional Japanese theatres, such as n*oh* and k*abuki* in the beginning of the mid-1970s to create a new stage expression and form (1989). "He welded Western drama with a Japanese theatrical paradigm, formulated his actor-training system (known as the 'Suzuki Method')" (Goto, 1989, p. 103). In the website of SCOT (Suzuki Company of Toga) in which I found Suzuki's rehearsal notes that are collected by Waseda Shogekijo and Kōsakushathe, and Tadashi Suzuki describes:

> In this work, it was an attempt to thoroughly emphasize the on-site nature of the theatre = physicality. Theatrical performance is the stage, and the stage is the world in which the actions of actors play a central role. He tried to re-question this trivial matter. This wasn't an attempt to specialize or privilege acting as an actor. Rather, on the contrary, it was more accurate to say that acting is the result of doubting whether acting is really an act supported by an impulse that is inevitable for human beings. It was my belief that clarifying this through none other than the stage itself would lead to the act of disclosing the mystery of human existence (1997).

By making this theatrical work, I argue that he was searching for the significance of human existence and his identity as a Japanese theatre artist. After presenting this work, he and his company were invited to perform in Paris and other cities in Europe and America.

Suzuki also mentions that a part of the reason why he decided to make such an attempt was influenced by the *Noh* performance by Hisao Kanzane that Suzuki saw in Theatre des Nations Festival in Paris in 1972. By attending this festival, he said he had two major discoveries. One is "a new idea for theatre design" and the second one is "the rich tradition of Japanese performing arts" (Goto, 1989, p.104). Regarding a new idea of theatre design, when he saw Hisao's performance, he realized the renewed potential of his artistic vision by watching traditional Japanese work in the modern theatre. The traditional performing arts such as n*oh* and

k*abuki* are normally performed in the traditional theatre that is conventional. Traditionally, it is rare to see performances presented in non-traditional theatres. When Suzuki saw the traditional Japanese theatre piece in an unconventional way, he realized a new possibility of using the rich theatricality of traditional Japanese theatre elements in Western plays. This foreign experience inspired him to explore "the possibility of revitalizing techniques and attitudes of tradition within the context of contemporary theatre. This was to become the quintessence of Suzuki's aesthetic, which continues today" (Goto, 1989, p. 105). After he traveled back to Japan from France, while he was exploring to integrate the traditional Japanese theatre expressiveness in the Western plays, he also developed a theory that is why this kind of experimentation was necessary for the Japanese theatre world (Goto, 1989). His theory evolved from his new idea of "the theatre as a reflection of socio-cultural condition" (Goto, 1989, p. 105).

According to Goto, Suzuki notes, "following the rules is not the only way to ensure a great performance. When a tradition can be successfully broken, the profundities of the no(h) can become all the more apparent (Suzuki 1984, p. 115; trans. in Suzuki 1986, 72)" (1989, p.105). Suzuki also thought that n*oh* and k*abuki* were not able to generate fresh energy by consistently following the traditional way to present to the contemporary Japanese audience (Goto, 1989). Suzuki thought that traditional Japanese performing arts do not reflect the current Japanese society and people any longer. There is a lack of connection between the traditional theatre work and contemporary Japanese people.

Kabuki and n*oh* reflect the times when they were created about three hundred years ago; an era in which gorgeous and flashy clothing became popular after surviving the difficult Warring States period in 19th century in Japan. People were relieving themselves of painful

experiences, honour people who passed, and sorrows by watching k*abuki* and n*oh.* People living in that era and related the incidents happening in daily life to those being performed on stage metaphorically. Thus, what was performed on the stage reflected Japanese society and issues. However, traditional Japanese performing arts are preserved as a tradition and are performed in their original form in the current era. Therefore, it cannot be said that traditional Japanese performing arts reflect the current contemporary Japanese society today.

In tandem with Suzuki's activity, Japan was facing the post-war era having lost the Second World War, and many things were rapidly changing. Western culture had become more and more incorporated into Japanese people's lives. It had become commonplace to fuse new Western culture while also preserving Japanese culture. With the spread of the Internet, it became possible to instantly know what was happening in the world. With the increase of people who have a global perspective, the borders between borders have become thinner, and at the same time, having a unique culture, Japaneseness has become something special to identify who we are and where we come from. Suzuki's exploration of a hybrid form of integrating Japanese traditional theatre elements into Western plays was a perfect reflection and example of the post-war Japan.

Suzuki also realized that in England, classical plays such as Shakespeare's theatre works are not only performed in classical theatres but modern theatres (Goto, 1989). Thus, he conceived an idea of "making use of a space where people had actually lived, a space filled with a history of actual human use" (Suzuki, 1984&Suzuki, 1986). In this concept, he discovered how to make a connection with a theatre piece, space, and people who lived in the past and also people who live in this time of era. In 1976, he put this discovery into action. He and a few of his

company members moved to a small village of Toga in Toyama prefecture, Japan. Since then, he has continued to make works in six theatres by remodelling and renovating old Japanese houses such as *gassho-zukuri* houses (houses with a steep rafter roof) and buildings. He renamed his company, *SCOT (Suzuki Company of Toga)* in 1984 and his company is still presenting works that combine elements of Western theatre using the traditional Japanese performing arts aesthetics. His activities in Toga attracted the attention of the world, and Toga Village suddenly became known as a sacred place for theatre, by theatre people, all around the world.

Encountering the Suzuki Method

About six years ago, when I was an undergraduate student in the Department of Dance at York University, I heard that one of the professors at the Theatre Department was teaching the Japanese theatre method, Suzuki Method. At that time, I was not familiar with the Suzuki method. I was simply very curious to see how Canadian actors were using this Japanese theatre technique and were trained by the Japanese theatre method. The course director was Michael Greyeyes. He is from the Muskeg Lake First Nation in Saskatchewan, Canada and he is a professor as well as a Canadian actor, director, dancer, and choreographer. He was generous to let me come in and observe his class while he was teaching the Suzuki method to students/actors. In the class, I remember that students were stamping their feet, holding their squat position, and moving through space enthusiastically. There was high energy of movements and concentration throughout the class. Sometimes, students laid down on the floor to be still and immersed in the vibration occurring in their body as a result of doing all the exercises that were high intensity

movements. I would describe my first impression of watching the class was described as energetic, intense, physical, and grounded.

In Western theatre training, realism is usually encouraged in order to play a character. Thus, actors usually bring real emotions or gestures from the character's perspective sometimes by reflecting their own personal experiences to act as authentically or naturally as they can. However, in the Suzuki method, he uses a different way to play a character by applying the traditional Japanese theatre approach. Goto notes by paraphrasing James Brandon (1975):

> The influences of nō and kabuki can also be observed in movements and gestures in Suzuki's productions. His actors, like traditional performers, do not create roles in the manner of the Western realistic theatre *shingeki*. They do not impersonate; they simply "act." Certainly, actor's personality emerges, but through the medium of the physicality gained through "Suzuki Method" training. As in traditional performance, the rich vocabulary of physical language interposes the personality of the individual actor and the role. However, while Suzuki's perform in a style reminiscent of no and kabuki acting, they do not act in forms or patterns (*kata*) of traditional theatre. The movement gestures of his actor and those of a traditional performer seem similar, because, explains Suzuki, they both draw upon the physicality Japanese as an agricultural people, such as feet planted in the earth (Goto, 1989, p. 113).

As Goto mentioned, the Japanese are agricultural people, we have a strong connection to the earth/ground/floor. Many of the traditional Japanese dances also contain movements of stamping, grounding, and gliding. In the previous chapter, I have mentioned about four features of Japanese movements by analyzing the dance piece, *The Wisteria Maiden*: k*amae, ju-shin, koshi, uchiwa*. In order to do all of those four movements, you have to feel the floor or have a relatively constant connection with the floor that requires an intense focus and physicality. In the

Suzuki method, these intense focus and physicality are also common primary elements described as Japanese elements in the exercises and the training.

Nostalgia for Past Japan: A Legend of Japanese Filmmaker, Akira Kurosawa

While Hijikata and Suzuki were evolving their new forms of expression and styles in dance and theatre, there was concurrently the active Japanese film director named Akira Kurosawa, who became internationally renowned. It is an interesting coincidence that most of the internationally famous Japanese artists in dance, theatre, and film experienced the Second World War and they have seen Japan before, during, and after the war from their respective perspectives.

Akira Kurosawa has directed about thirty films in his career. His early films were created in black and white. Many filmmakers, as well as audiences are mesmerized by the brilliance of his screenwriting as well as his technique to utilize shadow and light in black and white movies such as his first successful film, *Rashomon* (1951) that won the highest prize, the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival, *Seven Samurai* (1954), and *Yojinbo* (1961).

In Japan, some people call black and white movies, *Monokuro* films. *Monokuro* is an abbreviation for monochrome that means a single colour. When Kurosawa was young, he dreamt of being a painter. He was very enthusiastic about painting and drawing. He moved to Tokyo with his brother who was working as a *benchi* (a silent film narrator) in the film industry. Kurosawa tried to make a living as a painter. However, he was never able to make enough money to survive. After he lost his passion for painting, he started working as an assistant director for films at the film studio called Photo Chemical Laboratories (current Toho). That was how he

started learning how to make and direct films. I assume that his black and white film works incorporate his experience as a painter. Monochrome is not meant black and white as two colours to him, but it was meant as one (oneness of duality) that shadows (black) and lights (white) are indispensable. Shadows do not appear if there is no light.

While other Japanese filmmakers were making coloured films, Kurosawa kept creating *Monokuro* films utilizing shadows and lights. According to Francisca Cho, in one of his famous films called *Rashomon,* Kurosawa uses:

> The medieval Japanese Buddhist-inspired aesthetic concept of *yūgen* emphasizes the absence of light, movement, and form in order to create a sense of deep but non-discursive meaning. This pre-modern concept can be applied to the film *Rashomon* to appreciate how the movie uses light and shadow to point to the necessity of abandoning intellectual knowledge in order to move towards moral action (2016, p. 508).

Yūgen means a deep and faint beauty that is indescribable in words or "a hidden quality of graceful beauty or mystery; profound aestheticism" (Oxford English Dictionary). It is one of the important concepts in traditional Japanese aesthetics that are used in n*oh*, s*ado* (tea ceremony), and r*enga* (Japanese poetry). Kurosawa uses this *Yūgen* aesthetic not only in making superb cinematography but in screenwriting. In the film *Rashomon*, the story of the murder case is the main storyline, and the people who were at the scene of the murder and the witnesses each give testimony of the murder scene. However, it is not revealed who the murderer was after all. After hearing all the testimony, the truth remains a mystery and the answer is left to the audience. One character says that he cannot understand what happens in this world and does not know what the correct answer is. I assume that it was around the time when Kurosawa experienced

World War II and it reflects how Kurosawa himself felt in Japan, where many changes were occurring after the defeat.

Kurosawa was not a traditionalist. However, according to Robert Hyland who is a film researcher and specializes in Japanese, Korean and Chinese films, Kurosawa recognized the value and the beauty of traditional Japanese art that was often lost in Westernized Japan and Western aesthetics (2004). Hyland also quotes Kurosawa in the book from *Something Like an Autobiography.* Kurosawa said "Why is it that Japanese people have no confidence in the worth of Japan? Why do they elevate everything foreign and denigrate everything Japanese? Even the woodblock prints of Utamaro, Hokusai and Sharaku were not appreciated by Japanese until they were first discovered by the West" (1983, p.187). As Japan lost the war, the people and the lifestyle of Japan are becoming more and more westernized. Kurosawa may have had a fear of losing the Japanese aesthetics and traditions of past Japan. Hyland notes, "Kurosawa, in his work, does not try to create an aesthetic hierarchy, placing the Japanese artistic tradition above the Western tradition, but he is calling for a reinvestigation into Japanese art, demanding that contemporary Japanese society be literate and knowledgeable about its indigenous culture" (2004, p. 18). Although the first colour film was shown in 1951, Kurosawa did not make a colour film until 1971's *Dodesukaden.* During that time, he may have wanted to cherish old Japanese culture in the background of sticking to *Monokuro* (black and white) films for twenty years.

What these great Japanese artists, who are still famous all over the world in dance, theatre, and film worlds, have in common is that they have experienced Japan's World War II. The conventional wisdom in Japan collapsed after the war, and the Japanese economy and society was shifted dramatically. While major transition occurred, they were also perhaps

influenced by all those vicissitudes, but they were aware of those changes and influences, and continued to search for a new way of creation and life as Japanese artists in the regenerated Japanese society. Tastumi Hijikata invented the unique beauty of revolutionized Japaneseness of depicted by dark, grotesque, and disruptive imagery by using the opposition of typical traditional Japanese beauty and aesthetics in dance. Tadashi Suzuki was fascinated by the physicality of traditional performing arts. He has attempted to create relationships between traditional performing arts and contemporary society. The result of this attempt was the Suzuki Method, using the physicality of traditional Japanese performing arts in Western theatre productions and training. Akira Kurosawa as an acclaimed film director, screenwriter, and with a background as a painter, projected problems and doubts of the Japanese people and Japanese society at that time by weaving them into stories and scripts in his films. Not only that, but as Westernization progressed and Japan changed rapidly after the war, the good old Japaneseness and the essence of Japan that had taken root as Japanese people were reproduced on the pictures and screens of his movies.

All the artists mentioned in this chapter incorporated the essence of living as a Japanese person into their works, philosophies, and trainings. Continuing to search for a Japanese identity without losing its lineage was reflected with the durability, inquiring mind, and concentration as well as physicality cultivated in Japan in the past and traditional performing arts as the root of Japanese identity.

I also argue that what seems to be common to these three great artists is their "outsiderness", travel and adaptation. Although the three artists created and developed their works and artistry inside of Japan, their success and fame became more evident when they were

praised and recognized outside of Japan. Kurosawa questions that why Japanese people cannot find value or worth of their own Japanese culture. While they were working in Japan, it seems that people in Japan did not appreciate their unique Japanese perspectives in their works as much as people from abroad. Those Japanese elements were more emphasized and impactful to people outside of Japan. This “outsiderness" and travel may be a necessary process for Japanese or foreigners to reaffirm the value of Japanese culture. In my particular case, as I grew up and was trained in Japan, I argue that I maintained Japanese identity as evidenced by my dance practice that is highly predicated on my living in Toronto. For me, the process of adaptation that is fluid and yet grounded in major moments and movements experienced in Japan as well as in the experience working as a dance artist in Toronto that has its own cultural and historical identities.

Chapter 3: Review of Literature

Three primary texts and three major articles supported this thesis research. To conduct the research, the first step was to understand the origin and historical contexts of traditional Japanese dance and theatre in this project. The major focus was on *kabuki* and classical Japanese dance.

The book, *A History of Japanese Theatre*, edited by Jonah Salz contains twenty-four chapters of different articles written by fifty-seven authors as contributors. This volume provided rich historical information on Japanese performing arts from ancient times before the establishment of traditional Japanese performing arts in the mid-fourteenth century to the contemporary period. Two chapters provided me with the primary information needed to revisit the traditional Japanese performing arts' origin and history especially *kabuki* and classical Japanese dance.

One chapter was "Kabuki: superheroes and femmes fatales" written by Julie A. Iezii and another chapter is "Interlude Nihonbuyo: classical dance" written by Paul Griffith and Mariko Okada. The reason why these chapters were primary was that I had chosen the dance piece, *The Wisteria Maiden (Fujimusume)* that required me to closely look at the traditional Japanese dance elements that could dialogue with the choreographic process while seeking my Japanese roots in contemporary dance creation. As *The Wisteria Maiden* is often danced in *kabuki* and classical Japanese dance productions, learning and discovering the historical contexts and the connection between both performing art forms was vital to respectfully revisit and to find heuristic possibilities that are traditional Japanese dance elements and potential choreographic materials

such as aesthetics and movements. Both chapters have assisted my thesis writing and its dance creation, *New Nostalgia*.

In general, many people, even Japanese people often misinterpret the relationship between classical Japanese dance and *kabuki*. One of the reasons is that *kabuki* actors start their training by practicing the basics and aesthetics of classical Japanese dance movements and performances. Therefore, many people think that classical Japanese dance was invented before *kabuki*. However, in fact, the opposite is true. Classical Japanese dance was derived from *kabuki* due to its popularity. Therefore, the history of *kabuki* and the way it is expressed on stage have many elements of traditional Japanese performing arts such as aesthetics and fundamental movements that can be in dialogue with my research with contemporary dance creation. Julie A. Iezzi notes:

> Kabuki is a vibrant traditional form, known worldwide for its colorful make-up, complex plots, beautiful dance, all-male performance tradition, intimate connection with the audience, broad, presentational, bravura acting, and integrated, cinematic use of music. Kabuki, which emerged alongside bunraku as the first commercial theatre form in Japan, was largely nurtured by the commoner class, blossoming despite strict government regulation throughout the Tokugawa (Edo) period (1603–1868). When Japan was forcibly opened to the West in the Meiji era (1868–1912), kabuki responded to vast and rapid changes as leaders sought to remake this popular theatre form into one capable of representing a modern nation. Rising nationalism with the spread of the Pacific War prompted renewed censorship and censure, but kabuki again adapted by creating new stage works to support the war effort. After World War II, kabuki reemerged with the more "classical" persona by which it is known today. Four centuries of accommodating public interests, artistic strengths, technological developments, and political changes have generated the living tradition of twenty-first-century kabuki, with markers of its evolution and eclectic origins still visible in the variety of plays staged today (2016, p. 102).

Kabuki developed over the fourth century while responding to changes in the times. One of the significant changes was that a woman named Okuni around 1600 invented *kabuki*, but due to the strict rules of the government, wars, and the flow of the times, now various *kabuki* repertoire have been performed by only males. The fact is that *kabuki* and classical Japanese dance have been preserved as a tradition in the midst of the drastic changes in this era. I argue that the change in inheriting such a thing called tradition is to adapt to the times as a way to keep it alive while preserving tradition.

Another primary article and research that became the fundamental starting point of my thesis creation process is "Qualification of Characteristic Features of Japanese Dance for individuality Recognition" written by Mitsu Yoshimura, Nario Mine, Kamiko Kai, and Isao Oshimura. In this article, Mitsu Yoshimura et al. note that individuality has been a research interest in human behaviours, handwriting, and sports techniques by using technology (2001). In their research, they focused their attention on "the art of Japanese dance (2001)". Art measured by technology does not sound artistic any longer. This research employed technology that is a motion capture and in a 3D-track movement data while dancers are performing the choreographic sequences of *The Wisteria Maiden.* Such technology pays attention to individuality and four essential features of Japanese traditional dance that are *kamae* (pause), *jyu-shin* (lowering the centre of the gravity), *koshi* (hip), and *uchiwa* (turned in feet). This assisted in one of the important choreographic sections in my thesis choreographic creation. The characteristics of the movement of traditional Japanese dance may differ depending on the regions, works, and the type of dances, whether it is danced on the stage or is enjoyed as a social dance. Therefore, I assume that there are quite a few answers to the question: What is

characteristic of Japanese dance? However, this article first asserted the movements of the four traditional Japanese dances found in the dance piece of *The Wisteria Maiden (Fuji Musume)*, which I decided to investigate.

The focus of my research was not only on these four movements but also on the uniqueness and creativity of each dancer. In this article, I found an important point in my research to use these two factors that traditional Japanese dance features and to focus on the individuality of the dancer. This article had helped me find primary choreographic movements of traditional Japanese dance but also the attempt to draw out individuality while focusing on four elements of Japanese dance features by using improvisation transformed into the choreography.

As I have written in the earlier chapters, the objective of my thesis creation was not having my collaborators perform the exact movement sequences that I create in performing contemporary dance choreography. One of the challenges was how to get Canadian dancers to use the elements of Japanese dance in dialogue with their own dance training and experiences in the contemporary dance choreograph. This article had provided me with a possible solution of using a concept of the individuality and the four primary traditional Japanese movements from *The Wisteria Maiden*'s performance directed to be used in the structured improvisation session with individual Canadian dancers. The results have come to bring out the synergistic outcomes with an electric choreographic approach and elements not only from me as a researcher and choreographer but the dancers as well in a collaborative way using traditional Japanese dance features.

Throughout the choreographic process, dialoguing with those four traditional Japanese dance movement features in Canadian dancers' bodies during the creation with structured

improvisation and choreography became the synergy of individual contribution inspired by traditional Japanese movement elements with their own interpretation naturally applying with their own dance training and experiences. Being a Canadian Japanese dance artist with experiences of working for various dance companies that strive to create works of different artistic values and that are culturally and artistically diverse, it can be assumed that not only me but other individual dancers must have complex and mature experiences as movement artists. Learning to perform one particular style of choreography from one specific artist or choreographer may not honour all the dancers who are in the space and in the dance piece. I argue that instead of only me trying to find a way to dialogue with traditional Japanese dance elements, I invited dancers to do the same. I encouraged them to bring themselves into our common creative space in their own ways to discover how to dialogue with those elements in the structured improvisation and dance composition through their interpretation. This approach honours diversity, inclusivity, and individuality.

This argument was assisted by the section of the book called, *Against Interpretation* by Susan Sontag. According to her, "In some cultural contexts, interpretation is a liberating act. It is a means of revisiting, of transvaluing, of escaping the dead past" (1966). Those four traditional Japanese dance elements were set as forms. There were certain qualities and ways to do these movements as traditional Japanese dance features. Firstly, I let the dancers learn the movements and qualities as a way of revisiting. Subsequently, *how* each dancer created their own short dance sections using those four elements with a structured improvisation was a way of transvaluing as well as "escaping the dead past". Interpretation was a key for the choreographic process and

provokes another layer of individual creativity and contribution to the contemporary dance creation as a whole.

Sontag also notes the importance of our sensory experience in the process of interpretation. “Interpretation takes the sensory experience of the work of art for granted, and proceeds from there” (Sontag, 1966, p. 104). She also argues that our urban environment and the conditions of contemporary lifestyle such as an excess of information and overproduction dull our sensory and sensory experiences. She expresses the importance of recovering one’s senses “to *see* more, to *hear* more and to *feel* more” and “[t]he function of criticism should be *show[n] how it is what it is*, even *that it is what it is*, rather than to show *what it means*” (italics not mine) (1966, p. 104). Thus, in one of the choreographic sections in my thesis creation, I let dancers move without a lot of information rather than using those four traditional Japanese dance elements and primary movement qualities to be interpreted by using a spontaneous sensory experience while they are learning them, improvising them, and composing dance movements in the structured improvisational session as a choreographic tool. In this way, their interpretation and composition of the movements were their true sensory experience, dialoguing with the four traditional Japanese dance elements.

Another important article that supported my thesis research and creation was “The Theatrical Fusion of Suzuki Tadashi” written by Yukihiro Goto who is an expert on the Asian theatre techniques of *noh, kabuki*, Butoh, and Suzuki. This article was introduced in the previous chapter as an example of how Japanese traditional elements and theatricality could emerge with Western theatre productions by using Suzuki Tadashi’s theories and methods - “creating a unique synthesis of Japanese form with Western/modern content” (Goto, 1989, p. 104). In this section, I

wanted to especially focus on the adaptation method he introduces. According to Goto, “Suzuki's adaptation technique is reminiscent of two kinds of compositional devices common to Japanese literature: *honkadori* and *sekai*. *Honkadori* (literally, "taking a foundation poem") is a technique of classical poetry; *sekai* (literally, "world") is basic to traditional drama” (1989, p. 108). In the method of *honkadori,* Suzuki notes that “I aim to destroy their old values and at the same time create totally original ones. To rephrase it with some exaggeration, my method is to fulfill two desires in one single operation—destroying old values and simultaneously establishing new values” (Suzuki, 1973, p. 229-231). Goto brings an example of how *honkadori* works and is used in Japanese poems. He argues that the concept and adaptation method of *honkadori* can be found as "a standard compositional technique in classical Japanese poetry forms” (Goto, 1989). Goto quotes Earl Miner:

> Allusive variation. A later poet would take some diction and conception from an earlier "foundation poem" (honka) and vary it (-tori, -dori) with a new conception, perhaps making a spring poem of a summer foundation poem, or a love poem of a spring original. A major source of later poetry, it had various canons, such as avoidance of language from the most famous poems(1985, p. 277).

The outcome of the adaptation method, *honkadori* supports my goal for this thesis research and creation. I aimed to have fundamental movements from the traditional Japanese which could be interpreted and varied in my choreography while working with Canadian dancers to re-establish the old values to new ones that are original in the contemporary dance choreography. There were fundamental movements by revisiting the traditional Japanese dance features and those movements and aesthetics were adopted and adapted through the concept of *honkadori* adaptation method.

The last text that became a major resource being in our creative process in the studio and choreographic research was the section, "The Sacred Circle," from the book, *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity* written by Julia Cameron. Cameron has taught internationally on how to be creative and to maintain the creativity for the artists and others. In this book, she shares her research and method to pursue higher creativity by introducing tasks and steps that people can follow daily. I have included her "Sacred Circle Rules" in the studio, in my thesis' creative process (Cameron, 2002, p. 301):

Sacred Circle Rules

1. Creativity flourishes in a place of safety and acceptance.

2. Creativity grows among friends, withers among enemies.

3. All creative ideas are children who deserve our protection.

4. All creative success requires creative failure.

5. Fulfilling our creativity is a sacred trust.

6. Violating someone's creativity violates a sacred trust.

7. Creative feedback must support the creative child, never shame it.

8. Creative feedback must build on strengths, never focus on weaknesses.

9. Success occurs in clusters and is born in generosity.

10. The good of another can never block our own.

Cameron also notes, "As creative people, we are meant to encourage one another. That was my goal in writing *The Artist's Way* and it is my goal in teaching it. Your goal, it is my hope, is to encourage each other's dreams as well as your own. Creative ideas are brain-*children* (italics not mine). Like all children, they must be birthed and this birthing is both a personal and collective experience" (2002, p. 299). Thus, my personal creative vision was supported by the dancers with a collective experience based on these rules.

Chapter 4: Creative Process

This creative process was an attempt to create a contemporary dance piece, *New Nostalgia* by incorporating some of the elements of the classic and traditional Japanese dance – *The Wisteria Maiden* — in a contemporary choreographic dance practice with a group of collaborators. My literature review and research on classical Japanese dance, *kabuk*i, *The Wisteria Maiden*, and other Japanese art forms like theatre and film, provided a grounding in theory and practice that informed my approach with dancers in a studio, involved in a creative process with me and for themselves.

Prior to conducting the research in the studio, I distributed and collected a questionnaire that was provided to six of my dancers of the YDE (York Dance Ensemble) with the curiosity of what kind of images and knowledge the dancers would have about Japan, traditional Japanese dance, and Japanese culture. The questionnaires were answered anonymously.

There were the five questions asked:

1. What would you associate with when you hear the word, "Japan"?
2. What would you think of when you hear the word, "Japanese"?
3. Do you know any dance words or dance styles related to Japanese culture or diaspora?
4. What kind of images or words would you think of when you hear a word "Japanese", "Canadian", and "Japanese Canadian"? Please write down four words for each word.
5. Do you know kabuki or classical Japanese dance? If yes, how did you know and what impression do you have?

Many of them associated Japan with food, fashion, and rich cultural history that dates back to ancient times whereas, Canada was decolonized recently. One person mentioned Butoh

as one of the Japanese dance styles, but many of them did not know much about *kabuki* nor classical Japanese dance. It was helpful to know what kind of prior knowledge dancers may have in order to revisit some of the movements from *The Wisteria Maiden* (*kabuki* and classical Japanese dance).

Throughout the choreographic process, I collaborated with dancers to explore the movement vocabularies from the original work, *The Wisteria Maiden* with contemporary dance practice and aesthetics, and movement vocabularies to merge the traditional and contemporary elements in dance choreography and creation. One of my main curiosities was how Canadian dancers would dialogue and explore the choreographic tasks from the elements of traditional Japanese dance because my collaborators are the undergraduate students in the Department of Dance at York University. The main focus was not on how dancers could successfully learn the exact choreography based on what I create and teach or to perfectly master and learn the aesthetics of traditional Japanese movements from *The Wisteria Maiden,* but to internalize the Japanese elements into a contemporary interpretation. I was curious to see how those traditional Japanese dance features and elements that I discovered would dialogue and transform into contemporary choreography through the dancers' own movement exploration as well as mine throughout this experimental creation process.

In this chapter, the composition of dance choreographic elements and the creation process are discussed based on the contents introduced in the previous chapters. From Chapter 2, the origins of *kabuki* and classical Japanese dance were introduced. *Kabuki* was invented by a shrine maiden named Okuni. Based on the style, she took an audacious choice of dressing as a person in a bold, colourful and wacky style that was popular at that time. This bold, colourful, and

extraordinariness were incorporated in this research dance creation. As *kabuki* became popular, it created a dance category called classical Japanese dance. Over the years, both *kabuki* and classical Japanese dance have evolved and become traditional Japanese performing arts. By researching and examining the dance piece, *The Wisteria Maiden,* four major elements were explored by dancers. These were *kamae* (pause), *jyu-shin* (lowering the centre of the gravity), *koshi* (hip), and *uchiwa* (turned-in feet) which are essential features in Japanese dance (Yoshimura, M., et al, 2001, p. 191) in the choreographic process.

Choreographic Elements from *The Wisteria Maiden*

As mentioned earlier, k*amae, jyu-shin, koshi, uchiwa* were the major elements to be explored by dancers to generate movements in the first stage of the choreographic process. There were two primary interests to explore in this process: firstly, how those traditional Japanese elements could be dialogued with the contemporary dance creation process; and secondly, how Canadian dancers would explore these four traditional Japanese elements in their bodies in their own way. I had to mention that the purpose of this process and the final product did not have to faithfully reproduce the elements of these four traditional performing arts movements. In this study, I would like to see how these elements of traditional Japanese dance can be interpreted by each dancer, and the movements produced by each dancer are incorporated into the choreographic work.

Choreographic tasks and Introduction To Dancers

Exploration of k*amae, jyu-shin, koshi, uchiwa*

1. Learn each element of k*amae* (pause)*, jyu-shin* (lowering the centre of the gravity)*, koshi* (hip)*, and uchiwa* (turned in feet).

2. Explore each element on your own. Compose movements with sixteen counts of each element. Put all the sixteen counts of the four elements together as one sequence. As an additional task, explore the opposition of the movements of k*oshi* and u*chiwa*. For instance, with k*oshi*, the aesthetic of the movement is that a hip is an anchor to stabilize the body and movement. The image when you practice the movement of *koshi* is that usually dancers imagine the hip is in the box and not going anywhere out of the box. Thus, explore the movements that came out of this box that a hip was supposed to be in.

3. Same as u*chiwa*, after exploring movements with turned-in feet, explore movements with turned-out feet that will occur alternatively with turned-in feet, explore movements. This method was based on Hijikata's method, which started from Butoh to explore the opposition of movement or quality.

Applying Laban Movement Analysis (Body, Effort, Space, and Shape) to *The Wisteria Maiden*

In the winter term, I took a course called Method and Materials for Movement Observation in the Dance program at York University. During this course, I analyzed the dance piece, *The Wisteria Maiden* by utilizing Laban Movement Analysis. After this process, I found the primary elements I would like dancers to explore in my thesis, based on the categories of Body, Effort, Space and Shape. Within those four categories, in the Body category, I analyzed that a dancer tends to bend his knees softly to ground himself in order to dance smoothly though

space. In the Effort category, a dancer uses light, strong, sustained and direct movement quality. In the Shape category, a dancer sometimes dances as if she is a wisteria flower even though she is a young girl who misses and loves her lover. In the dance piece, this motif of the shape of the wisteria flower is explored. In the Space category, it was found that if a dancer moves forward, then a next step tends to move backward, and if she twists her upper body to the left, she often uses movement and space in the opposite direction: he twists to the opposite side that is right next. I must indicate here that this analysis is based on my own observation. Thus, if other people analyze this dance piece, they may have a slightly different opinion or findings. Based on my analysis, I have composed the exploratory choreographic score that dancers will apply to create small dance phrases.

1. (Body) Move with bended knees. Both or one of the knees is bent all the time to make movements. Explore and make 8 counts of a set choreography with bended knees.
2. (Effort) Make movements with Gliding (Light, Direct, and Sustained) and Pressing (Strong, Direct, and Sustained). Also, Punching (Quick, Direct, and Strong). Explore and make 8 counts of a set choreography each combining those three effort elements.
3. (Shape) Explore the shape of a wisteria flower. Set a choreography without any restriction of counts or a length of time.
4. (Space) Explore the opposite direction of space. For example: if you make a movement reaching forward, for the next movement, you reach back or going the opposite direction where you reached. Explore and this part will be a structured improvisation, no set of choreography.

5. Organize all the movements from 1 to 4 and perform it where you decide your front. Go through it once and change the direction where you face back. Perform 1 to 4 once more, so you repeat this score twice, but facing front and back wherever you decide.

I hoped to explore and insert all of the elements using Laban Movement Analysis. however, because of the limited rehearsal time and the lockdown due to the pandemic, I was able to explore only Body, Effort, and Shape elements into the choreography in the end.

Collaboration with paper artist, Christine Kim: Application of K*abukimono/Kabuki* aesthetics

In Chapter 1, I noted how k*abuki* was created from the aesthetics of k*abukimono* that are elegant, strange, colourful, enthusiastic, and a spectacle. Most of the *Kabuki* productions including *The Wisteria Maiden* use not only an impressive choreography but also gorgeous stage sets and props as a visual affect. In my previous dance works, my main focus was about physicality. I have rarely used any props in my dance choreography because I believed that dance is a physical form of expression and an art form designing movements in space with our own body.

In the fall semester of 2020, I took the course, I*nitiating, Forming and performing Choreography I* taught by Freya Björg Olafson, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Dance at York University. I encountered the choreographic project called *Choreographic Objects* by William Forsythe. He notes, "[T]he introduction of the term 'choreographic object' is intended as a categorizing tool that can help identify sites within which to locate the understanding of potential organization and instigation of action-based knowledge. With this

tool, the proliferation of choreographic thinking across wider domain of arts practice can be thrown into relief" (William Forsythe).

Inspired by the concept of *Choreographic Object* and also being fascinated by the spectacle stage sets and props that a dancer uses in *The Wisteria Maiden,* I have decided to incorporate one prop in order to incorporate the k*abukimono* aesthetics, that is a paper prop. Demand for paper has become very low as digitalization progresses. Yet in Japan, paper is so familiar to Japanese people's lives and culture that it is sometimes called w*ashi* (Japanese paper/和紙). I found one paper artist based in Toronto named Christine Kim. She told me that paper art is not the most popular art form in the visual art community and it is one of the dying art forms. I met her during the pandemic and I slightly felt the same sense of urgency towards dance.

During the COVID period, many of us as dance artists lost places to practice, rehearse, and perform. While television and film productions are running, dance artists were required to stay at home. The historic dance community places in Toronto such as Dancemakers and Dovercourt House where the longest-running improvisational dance class in the world was held, were forced to shut down due to the financial difficulty. It seems dance has been disappearing from our community and our lives. By incorporating one prop that is paper and applying the k*abukimono* aesthetic with a concept of *Choreographic Object*, I began to explore the choreographic possibility to transform the traditional Japanese dance aesthetic from *The Wisteria Maiden* into the contemporary dance work and practice as well as making a new opportunity and a collaborative possibility for dance artists and paper artists.

Please also refer Rehearsal Notes and Journal Entry from Appendix page 73 to 83 for the details of the choreographic process.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to discover a methodology to create a contemporary dance work that could dialogue with traditional Japanese dance elements. Another goal was to find a successful way to also incorporate the dancer's individuality in the process of contemporary dance making while the dancers incorporated the traditional Japanese dance features.

Before conducting the research in the studio with dancers, I was able to search and inquire into the history of *kabuki* and the classical Japanese dance in the relation to *The Wisteria Maiden* which is famous for both in *kabuki* and classical Japanese dance. Throughout this process, I found that *kabuki*'s bright stage sets, costumes, and presentational aesthetics were derived from *Furyu* dance and also classical Japanese dance was derived from *kabuki*. Not only the history of *The Wisteria Maiden (Fujimusume*) but also the process of revisiting the history and putting them together in writing was very useful as it could be said that the knowledge I gained became the foundation in the choreographic process and I was able to provide more relevant information for the dancers in the creation process.

Moreover, I conducted the research of Japanese artists in the area of dance (Tatsumi Hijikata), theatre (Tadashi Suzuki), and film (Akira Kurosawa) who have successfully gained the international recognition as Japanese artists. One of the common elements that I must argue is each artist strived to create their own art works in relation to their Japanese heritage. The time they were making their works was around the time of the Second World War and the

environment of Japan was rapidly changing due to their defeat in the war. The influence of the war was undeniable for the artists mentioned.

Tastumi Hijikata who is the pioneer of the Japanese contemporary dance form, Butoh, was trying to find a new way to express his identity and own beauty through dance by destroying the typical Japanese beauty from the tradition that is elegant, gorgeously bright (*miyabi*), and colourful. The aesthetic that presents a visual beauty with decorations such as props, costumes and stage set from the outside was not his interest nor inspiration to explore. Instead of following the typical Japanese beauty, he investigated his own beauty with dark, grotesque, and true human expression from within.

Tadashi Suzuki was trying to find a new way to change the Japanese theatre scene by renewing the old value to the new with incorporating both the Western theatre elements and traditional Japanese theatre elements. He transformed the Western theatre plays to fit the Japanese audiences by using *Honkadori,* one of his adaptation methods. Yukihiro Goto mentions that the way Suzuki uses his method seems that it is similar to a standard technique in classical Japanese poetry (1989), creating a new form by renewing the old value and forms.

Akira Kurosawa was trying to remind people of the beauty and value of old-Japan by continuing to create black and white (*monokuro*) films while Japan was rapidly changing under the major upheavals and adapting the Western culture in our society after the defeat of the war. I would argue that Japanese people became highly adaptable with the circumstance with new technologies, western value of beauty and a new way of living. Consuming and buying new things immediately promoted materialization. In old Japan, it was important to delicately clean one thing and use it for a long time. However, that idea faded after the war. It was Kurosawa who

continued to take pride in the value of the ideas that Japanese people had in the past and projected them onto movies to create new works.

While working in Toronto as a dance artist from Japan and dancing for the dance companies and choreographers who have varied cultural backgrounds, my body experienced diverse dance movements and my experience and knowledge have expanded. However, I was lost in how I value my artistry through dance with my Japanese identity. I needed an anchor to start creating and exploring with all the experiences I can now embrace from Japan and Canada to successfully honour both identities in my own dance-making process.

Such academic research including the history of *The Wisteria Maiden*, the origin of *kabuki* and classical Japanese dance, and other acclaimed Japanese artists in dance, theatre and film provided me a primary foundation to start the investigation and the choreographic research in the studio with dancers.

My major discovery was found while working with dancers with the Japanese dance features that are movements from *The Wisteria Maiden*. Along with the YDE dancers, I have focused to incorporate four specific movements that are *kamae* (pause)*, jyu-shin* (lowing the centre of the gravity)*, koshi* (hip)*, and uchiwa* (turned in feet) to create choreographic sequences. In the beginning, dancers learned those four movements from me. After they studied and practiced the movements that were given to them, they were also provided with the time to explore those movements with the question of what it means to dialogue with those elements within their own bodies and choices. This process worked to incorporate both the traditional Japanese dance elements and the dancers' individuality in the contemporary dance creation process. The movements I provided already comprise the specific aesthetics from the traditional

Japanese dance. Exploring those movements with the dancers' own exploration and interpretation added the synergetic outcome as a final creation project. In this thesis dance creation, *New Nostalgia,* the academic research gave me an opportunity to re-discover the meaning of "New" and "Nostalgic" as an experience working as a dance artist in Canada and Japan with dancers. This dance piece in which the nostalgia sleeping in me was blossomed by the new talented individual dancers. I am confident this methodology would work in the future when I work with other dancers from anywhere in the world and I could state that I found the way to successfully incorporate traditional Japanese dance elements while honouring each dancer's individuality in the contemporary dance making.

The second major discovery was found while collaborating with the paper artist. The MFA in dance program aims to focus on choreography, collaboration, and creation. The process of collaboration was my first challenge in the contemporary dance-making although the stage works are conceivably often collaborative in process with a lighting designer, music composer, costume designer and more. However, collaborating with paper artists to create some of the traditional elements into paper arts that will be activated by dancers provided me with a new way of looking at the traditional elements in the different perspective. The motif of the colour of purple and the wisteria flower was used in this collaborative process.

Furthermore, with paper arts, I have experimented with ways to incorporate the aesthetics from *kabuki*:

> [T]raditional kabuki is presentational, every effort being made to show actions outwardly to the audience in a conscious and beautiful manner. Regardless of the specific character or circumstance portrayed, every aspect of performance strives for visual beauty. This ranges from the overall set construction or large-scale tableaux (group poses), down to

> the smallest details of costume and properties, and each movement and gesture (Griffith&Okada, 2006, p. 146).

As I mentioned this *kabuki* aesthetic in the previous chapter. Paper art is also one of the dying art forms due to the technology and digitalized environment we currently live in. Because of the digital technology, people hardly use a paper or pay attention to the value, beauty, and possibilities of the paper. Paper is disappearing from our society. I must note that I felt the same way about dance when the pandemic hit. We lost our place to practice, search, create, and present our works and many of the historical studios and theatres were forced to closed during the pandemic. Dance was also disappearing from the city and our lives.

However, the potential artistic collaboration that supports both dance and paper art have been discovered within this thesis research and creation project. We have discovered how to create choreographies while dancers were exploring movements with paper arts. As I aimed to incorporate the aesthetic from *kabuki* and *The Wisteria Maiden* with paper art was choreographed to achieve the visual beauty of the paper and the dancers' movements. Striking pauses as an individual and an ensemble with paper arts and many of the movements which are slow and subtle supported to achieve some of the aesthetics from *kabuki* while choreographing the contemporary dance work. If we had more time, I would have liked to conduct more research in this choreographic section about object, embodiment, and choreography.

Throughout the research, I have found the foundation of the choreographic methodology that would dialogue with the traditional dance elements for creating the contemporary dance work. Such discovery came from both the academic research and practical research in the studio.

All the processes were synergetic in that if I was not able to conduct both parts of the research I would not have this rich outcome in both writing and creation.

By investigating the history of *kabuki* and *The Wisteria Maiden (Fujimusume)*, I have discovered that there have been a lot of transitions and evolutions before it became tradition. By investigating the activities of internationally acclaimed Japanese artists, I also have discovered the commonality that everyone happened to experience the Second World War. Shannon Litzenberger, a performance maker, embodied facilitator, and researcher argues that "The role of the artist in a time of transition is, most essentially, one of world-making" (2021).

In the beginning of my research, my goal was to find the traditional Japanese elements that could dialogue with contemporary dance creation to discover my identity in dance-making and research. Throughout the process, I was able to discover the answers in the studio with dancers while exploring four movements from *The Wisteria Maiden* and exploring movements with paper arts. At the same time, I experienced other challenges due to the COVID restrictions, including dancers needing to wear masks and being two-feet apart while moving with no physical touch or connection in the choreography. We needed to adjust to create and research under the restricted circumstances.

The history of *kabuki* taught me that there was always a way to keep doing what we want and love to do. Historically, k*abuki* was banned twice by the Japanese government, but *kabuki* artists gathered their ideas and tried new approaches to keep performing *kabuki* and this is how it became a tradition that has remained for six hundred years. Currently, many artists are in transition. Litzenberger also notes:

> The process of art-making is a process of world-making because it explores horizons of possibility in ways that engage our fully embodied sensory capacities, including our imagination. Creation processes value integrated forms of knowledge production, including intuition, perception and emotion, in addition to conceptual thought. As such, these are processes capable of working on our ways of being, as well as on our ways of thinking and doing, all within the volatile conditions we find ourselves in (2021).

If art-making is a way of world-making, now I am curious to keep conducting this research outside of the university setting to keep expanding the research and creation by dialoguing with traditional Japanese features and individuality while making contemporary dance in collaboration with other artists.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Choreographic Notes and Journal Entry

1st Rehearsal&Research: Tuesday, Sep. 28, 2021
The goal of the day: Knowing each dancer and each other
-Introduction: shared names, dance training backgrounds
-Warm-up and check-up with your body
-Teach&Learn four traditional Japanese movements of *kamae* (pause), *ju-shin* (lowering the centre of the gravity), *koshi* (hip), and *Uchiwa* (turned-in feet)
-Improvisational session
-Composition
-Showing
-Feedback and share

Journal:
I found that when I taught the traditional Japanese dance movements to dancers, their bodies reacted as if they were learning the foreign language for the first time. Their focus and concentration were great to observe and absorb all the information that was given, but their bodies are stiff to do the movements while I was teaching. It was obvious that we need to visit the movements in every rehearsal to sink in the quality and the aesthetics of the movements before conducting the choreographic process.
From the improvisation, it was useful to observe each dancer's habitual movements, tendencies, and also choices to move in the space as well as recognize the different quality of the movements from the dancers either when they were doing an improvisation or a choreography. I found that dancers sometimes execute themselves differently when they dance in choreography and improvisation.

The 2nd Rehearsal&Research: Wednesday, Sep. 29, 2021
The goal of the day: Focus on the quality and individuality
-Warm-up
-Review the solos (what we created from Tuesday)
-Learn each other's solo and build a choreography

Order&Movements (The number is the order):
Abbey/pause 6
Derek/hip 5
Jessica/ pause 1
Blythe/pause 4
Kelsey/hip 3
Bayley/turned-in&hip 2

Space:

Derek Bayley
Blythe
Jess
Abbey
Kelsey

(Front)

-Introduce the new collaborative/research object: paper art

Journal:
It was fascinated to observe how each dancer learned and explored four Japanese movements on their own and came up with their composition. I could see the diverse point of view that is fluid. Although the movements and aesthetics are not from here in Canada, it was interesting to see the aesthetics of the Japanese traditional movements in their bodies as well as newly and uniquely interpreted movements at the same time in the choreography.

Notes for the next rehearsal:
-Bayley&Derek get closer with the same timing
-Jess enters at the same time, but further
-When Jess rises her hands, Derek&Bayley join and continue Bayley's movements. After Bayley continues she does Jessica's movements. When Jessica walks in, going Blythe from the second grand plié. Blythe continues.
-Blythe enters the same place. It's working.
-When Abbey lays down, Kelsey starts.
-Kelsey's section, take out the turn in standing
-Try the improvisation with four elements

3rd Rehearsal&Research: Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021
The goal of the day: Find the new possibility with four Japanese traditional elements with improvisation and contemporary choreographic practice
-Warm-up (Present Practice/James Jin)
-Revisit&learn the aesthetics of *Kamae, Ju-shin, Koshi, and Uchiwa* again to sink in the quality of the movements
-Improvisation with four elements

Jornal:
Because dancers used the same fundamental movements not a concept or idea for the improvisation, I was able to see the movements with the same aesthetics, but the different variations of what I physically taught which I was hoping to establish in this dance section, and research.

4th Rehearsal&Research: Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021
The goal of the day: Look at each dancer's entrance and keep building the choreography
-When Bayley does the dévelopé, Jess comes in.
-Insert the structured improvisation section with Abby and Kelsey to start the group unison section
-Four dancers do the hand and face structured improvisational movements and wave while going down to the floor and do the shoulder rolls.

Journal:

The section is building gradually. Because of the pandemic and lockdown, in the beginning, it was challenging to imagine the choreography with the large space with six dancers. For about two years, I have danced, rehearsed, and choreographed either solo or duet in the small space, so it was a different kind of adjustment I needed to make in my bed to imagine this section to be performed in the large theatre space.

5th Rehearsal&Research: Tuesday, Oct. 26, 2021
The goal of the day: Simplify the section
-Warm-up (Moving Meditation)
-Learn choreographic materials
-Try from the beginning with some music options, see how dancers would feel and react with different music (1. Trio: try a. improvisation of *Jushin.* b. Jessica's material/ 2. Duet: Just sit down/ 3. Pay attention to the unison section for the new possible change)

Journal:
I have realized that I was comfortable moving by using bigger space today rather than enjoying the stillness of the body. Thoughts came and went during the warm-up and with this warm up because dancers looked stressed and tired, this warm-up of moving meditation helped to let go of things you hold on to as well as check in yourself. Once they had this warm-up, I noticed the change of the space with more focused attention and openness to take directions in the rehearsal. I acknowledged repeatedly that I have been watching everyone's solo material from the four Japanese traditional elements and it is great to see something that speaks their own personality and individuality, but all the solos came from the same fundamental movements and that indicate the same quality or aesthetics of the choreographic movements such as smoothness, momentum, determined, clean, strong, flow, detailed, gentle, and dynamic.

6th Rehearsal&Research: Wednesday, Oct. 27, 2021
The goal of the day: Remind ourselves why we dance and find the right music for the section we've been working on
-Warm-up: Revisiting the reasons why we dance
Feel your breathing and empty all the breathing from your body. Also, at the same time, empty yourself from thoughts and feelings that we hold on in the present moment. After this process, ask yourself why we dance. How you started dancing. Ask if those reasons that you found why you dance would be different from when you started dancing or if it would be the same.
Ask yourself, how do you feel when you are dancing or watching a dance? Start moving slowly to express those feelings gradually at this moment in the studio. Feel and recognize how you ACTUALLY feel when you are dancing and moving. Continue to explore more.
-Hold on to how you what you have discovered in the warm-up and go over the dance section we have built on so far.

The 1st In-Progress MFA Showing: Thursday, Oct. 28, 2021
Feedback:
-Strong movements and opening

-Could see the choreographic elements are evolving
-Think of what it means to quote “tradition”
-Saw individuality, kabuki aesthetics, exploration of the walk with *Ju-shin* (lowering the centre of the gravity), and *Uchiwa* (Turned-in feet)
-The Japanese movements and elements were rooted in their bodies rather than formed.
-Explore the unison section

Journal:
The showing and feedback were helpful to acknowledge what I have been researching and exploring were properly executed through dancers’ movements and bodies. It was fearful at first to think of how Japanese movements could be executed and presented in the contemporary dance work with Canadian dancers, but the way I have explored with dancers worked with Japanese elements as a primary source to explore the choreography and also what they mean to their bodies and to understand the quality of the movements.

7th Rehearsal&Research: Tuesday, Nov. 2, 2021
The goal of the day: Revisit the Japanese movements to mature the movement quality in the choreography
-Practice walks with *Ju-shin* (lowering the centre of the gravity)
-Clean up the section with feedback from the showing
-Run it and explain the next process

8th Rehearsal&Research: Wednesday, Nov. 3, 2021
The goal of the day: Explore the choreographic possibilities with the new idea to build a section with paper art
-Lecture about *The Wisteria Maiden* (History, Aesthetics of kabuki and classical Japanese dance, props)
-Make 3 duet group (Derek&Abbey, Kelsey&Jess, Blythe&Bayley) to explore the movements with paper arts

Journal:
There were various possibilities to pursue to build a choreography in this idea and task. Using paper art to move was a totally different approach creating a movement as a composition. The focus goes both to dancers and paper arts. Thus, the challenge is what I need to focus on to execute the aesthetics from kabuki and *The Wisteria Maiden*’s elements. in the previous dance section, the focus was more on the movements, but in this section, the focus is more on the aesthetics. Therefore, it is important to explore the movements that will support both dancers’ movements as well as the paper art. The paper art could be just a prop or object just like how a dancer uses the props from *The Wisteria Maiden*, but this approach may not work in this choreographic process.

9th Rehearsal&Research: Thursday, Nov. 4, 2021
The goal of the day: Keep exploring and apply the discovery from the last session

-Build the section from the movement exploration from the previous rehearsal
-Build and draft both the choreography and the structured improvisation section in the work
Notes:
2x8 Derek, Abbey choreography
4x8 Two of the move through the space with improv
2x4 Blythe and Bayley enters (0.37)
2x8 Kelsey and Jessica enters (1:02)
4x8 Combine 2 duet groups (1:27)
4x8 Combine 3 duet groups (1:52)
2x8 Walking and Ending

Journal:
Because the aim of this section is to apply one of the kabuki aesthetics that is to strike the visual beauty I have realized that choreographing is not only making movements but also composing the beauty of the dancers and movements at the same time. Also, the lecture about *The Wisteria Maiden* helped dancers in order to understand the aesthetics of this particular beauty especially when they're doing the structured improvisation.

10th Rehearsal&Research: Tuesday, Nov. 9, 2021
The goal of the day: Cleaning the second section
-Take a close look at the beginning and the end
-Look at the ending of the other section to think of the transition
-At the end with the pause, think of the image with the winter flower and the pine tree from the stage set of *The Wisteria Maiden*
-Look at the movements and the pauses from *The Wisteria Maiden* and incorporate in the paper art section

Journal:
The other section with four Japanese dance elements has been subtle compared to the new section with the paper art. The slow movements may work better than the fast-paced movements with the paper arts because of the two elements I am trying to combine and look at it as the audience. The paper art and dancer's movements have to be fused as one rather than looking at two different objects moving together.

11th Rehearsal&Research: Tuesday, Nov. 16, 2021
The goal of the day: Generate new choreographic materials with the new movement research idea (Laban Movement Analysis and *The Wisteria Maiden*).
-Clean two sections we have built especially the unison section
-Generating new choreographic materials
Body: Knee bent 16 counts
Effort: Pressing (Strong, Direct, Sustained), Gliding (Light, Direct, Sustained), and Punching (Quick, Direct, Strong) 8 counts each
Shape: Shape of wisteria flowers

Space: Opposite directions

Journal:
Two sections we have been working on getting stronger with the sense of the deeper embodiment of movements we have choreographed so far. the next step will be how to connect with music, movements, and the movement quality. When we worked on generating the new choreographic materials, it was a fascinating and provoking process of how each dancer take the task of exploring the movements and building a variety of movement vocabularies from the same choreographic idea and the movement idea. I can clearly see that each dancer was taking initiative to make a choice to integrate the task with their own way of interpretation.

12th Rehearsal&Research: Friday, Nov. 19, 2021
The goal of the day: Work on the beginning of the new section and build a choreography with materials we generated from the last rehearsal.
-Plan A with Abby
a. Fill in Abby (30 mins)
b. Connecting with music and movements (15 mins)
c. Choreograph the beginning of the new section (15 mins)
d. Introducing another idea of utilizing Laban Movement Analysis in choreography (15 mins)
e. Showing (15 mins)
-Plan B without Abby
Do from b to e above

Journal:
One person's energy will change the whole section of the performance. It was important to connect with each dancer as a group to perform all the sections today. Today, I felt that choreography was not only designing the movements, but the whole space around dancers, while they were performing was also the active space that would express and made meanings for some other people. Thus, in this rehearsal, I felt I was not only looking at the movements but also the space in relation to the movements.

13th Rehearsal&Research: Tuesday, Nov. 23, 2021
The goal of the day: Clean up all the sections and take a closer look at the last section with paper art to further explore and find the effective way to use paper art with dancers' movements.
-Clean up the paper art section.
-Move on continuing building the new section
4~8 Set&Fix (0:26)
2~8x2 Bayley from the jump/dancers join after her jump(0:41)
6~8 Blythe&Keyley (0:55)
2~8 Derek (1:02)
2~8 Unison (1:10)
2~8 Knee section with everyone (1:17)
12~8 Derek, Jess, Blythe, Bayley, Kelsey with Effort

4~8 The end

Journal:
The cleaning takes more time than I expected, so I could not build the new section I had in my minds with notes above. However, it was necessary to take this time for the paper section to handle the paper arts and learn how to effectively control them while dancing. It is the same process in classical Japanese dance that when we use any props firstly we practice some of the techniques and practice the movements and technique first before applying in the choreography. Today, we took this approach in the paper art section to use paper arts safely and practically and apply those learnings and practices in our choreographic section.

14th Rehearsal&Research: Thursday, Nov. 25, 2021
Supervised and rehearsed by Dee

15th Rehearsal&Research: Tuesday, Nov. 30, 2021
The goal of the day: Clean up the two sections and build the new section with the elements of Laban movement analysis and *The Wisteria Maiden*.
2~8 Bayley
6~8 Blythe&Kelsey
2~8 Derek
2~8 Unison or Individual
2~8 Repeat
12~8 Derek, Jess, Blythe, Bayley, Kelsey, Abbey or Jess, Blythe, Kelsey, Bayley, Derek, Abbey
4~8 Figure out the ending

Journal:
What I planned was not all accomplished today. Two hours was just enough to clean up the two sections we have built on. It is important to take time to look closer at the movements and the quality of the movement that the dancer is presenting, but it took much time and I did not rush to move forward. I could have pushed to build the new section we were working on, however, it was much more important to take time in the paper art section for the dancers to fully execute the movement with music and paper arts at the same time. The new section is 1/3 finished. However, I am not sure if we have time to build the section and also rehearse it to the level that will be ready to be performed on stage.

The 2nd In Progress MFA Showing
Questions arose:
In terms of questions, what I was thinking of asking was in the section of paper arts, "how I could fully use this paper art to achieve visual beauty with movements. I decided to use these paper arts in order to incorporate the aesthetics from kabuki which is the traditional Japanese dance piece I am closely looking at and analyzing.
" Traditional kabuki is presentational, every effort is made to show actions outwardly to the audience in a conscious and beautiful manner. Regardless of the specific character or

circumstance portrayed, every aspect of performance strives for visual beauty. This ranges from the overall set construction or large-scale tableaux (group poses), down to the smallest details of costume and properties, and each movement and gesture"(Griffith&Okada, 2006, p. 146).
When we started using paper arts they're more like a prop that we're manipulating, but as the choreographic process progresses, we gradually started using it as if they're part of the dances' movements, and I feel like the paper arts are becoming a part of dancers/movements. I was hoping this approach was the right direction. And, if I should look into the embodiment, object, and dance.
Feedback:
From Tracey Norman
-sensual, well-paced, beautiful opportunities to really see the dancers, virtuosic in so many different ways.
-I find it a really strong opening with Derek onstage. I think being able to watch him longer before Bayley enters would be great. He's so compelling and as I imagine the audience adjusting to the beginning of your work, I think it could use more time to establish.
-overall, I go from a sense of longing or need at times in the first part toward a sense of celebration, jubilance and ritual with the introduction of the paper arts/kabuki work.
-I question when the group of dancers sits for a long time facing upstage left while one of their solos (I believe this is what happens). But maybe they're not lit or shadowed?
I tend to question anytime people are in stillness for extended times on stage. And also how they come out of stillness. Bayley does first and it looks like a dancer's cue as opposed to a reason. I wonder if you can look at "why" and "how" they come out of stillness.
-regarding your question about the utilizing the paper arts, I think you're on the right track. I think embodiment and the paper being an extension of the body is the way to go. I think you can go even further in this direction. I'm curious how they will arrive on stage with them – I think right now you're figuring that part out.

16th&17th Rehearsal&Research: Tuesday&Thursday, January 18&20, 2022
The goal: Review the choreographic sequences and materials with Body and Effort.
-Read the "Sacred Circle Rules" (Cameron, 2002, p. 301)
-Warm-up by doing the present practice from James Jin
-Share the video clips from the last year's rehearsal to review materials of Body/Bent Knees&Effort/Punching (15 mins)
-Show and Share the materials
-Organize them in order

Journal:
Due to the recent lockdown, we needed to conduct our rehearsal process on a Zoom setting. This was the first time we did our rehearsal/research session on Zoom since last September. It was a productive process to go to your own studio moment to review the choreographic materials at home individually to show and share at the end of the rehearsal. The final process would be sharing the materials to other dancers to let them learn. However, in the online setting, it is challenging to teach and share the choreographic movements accurately because the details of

the movements and nuances slip out by watching the screen rather than the actual human body in person. Thus, the next process that is the teaching and learning part has to be conducted in the studio setting in person. However, it was good to know that reviewing the materials individually with your own space and timing was useful to connect dancers and also get them to observe other dancers' choreographic materials.

18th Rehearsal&Research: Tuesday, January 25, 2022
The goal: Review and gather the choreographic materials together to build the first section
Notes:
0:26 Bayley 2-8 (Body)
Blythe with everyone 2-8 (2 lines facing opposite direction) (Body)
Kelsey 2-8 (solo) (Boby)
0:56 Everyone again
1-8, 2-8 Explore
2-8 Choreography
1:18 Abbey+Derek (Body)
Derek 2-8 (Effort)
1:32 Abbey 2-8 (Effort)
Everyone 1-8 (Body)
1:40 Bayley (Effort) 1-8+4 counts
1:47 Kelsey+Blythe 2-8 (Effort)
1:54 Jessica (Effort)
2:02 Ending 4-8

Journal:
Most of the choreographic materials are integrated into the final choreography. It was a fascinating process to see the materials come together with the movement observation using the Laban Movement analysis as well as using the oppositional effort element. Some of the choreographic materials were transformed by the interpretation of the dancers yet the movement concept and materials came from the same choreographic idea.

19th Rehearsal&Research: Thursday, January 27, 2022
The goal: Completing the first section
-Review what we have built so far
-Finish the choreography of the first section
-Apply the notes by looking at the video footage from the previous rehearsal

Journal:
The choreography was complete at this point and we need to work on making the movements soak into the body from the next rehearsal. For the first time, I took a different approach to giving the notes to the dancers by showing the video footage from the previous rehearsal rather than only the oral ones. This process of visualizing the notes and corrections by looking at the rehearsal footage was more effective than just telling the notes and corrections orally. The

process of applying the note into the dancers' bodies was more sufficient and quicker. This process would be useful for future rehearsals and research creation.
20th Rehearsal&Research: Tuesday, February 1, 2022
The goal: Run the first and second sections together
Notes:
-Bayley's solo (1-8 simplify the choreography)
-The new choreographic section in the middle, not going on 5, but 3 after Kelsey's section. Try the 2 versions: 1. Going down. 2. Just walking
-Insert the jump before the Abbey+Derek section
-In the Abbey+Derek's section, Look at Kelsey
-Add Kelsey and Blythe's section before Abbey
-Modified Abbey's choreographic section

Journal:
It was making sense to look at the details of the choreography with individual dancer to match because there is a lot of unison in this first and second section. Even though it is a union section, I preferred to see the individual interpretation o the choreographic material, so I can see the personality of the dancers in the choreography rather than strictly only follow the choreography. The personal interpretation can be emphasized to be captured to integrate the choreography to apply for other dancers. Thus, I encouraged them to put their own effort into the choreography, so the movements were more vibrant.

21st Rehearsal&Research: Wednesday, February 2, 2022
The goal: Run all the three sections together
Notes:
-Look at Jessica's and Bayley's solo (10 mins)
-Look at Kelsey's solo
-Deeper Plié in the corner
-Kelsey gets closer to the rest of the group
-Look at how they walk and stop at the side in lines

Journal:
At this point, the choreography is now living in the dancers' bodies. All the choreographic materials and elements utilized to generate the choreography were becoming the dancers' language to communicate with the viewers. How they execute the movements and put the feeling of their own to perform is more than just doing the choreography and movements. Especially, in the second section, because we have choreographed this section at first, dancers' movement execution is richer than in the other sections. Lowering the centre of the gravity that is *Ju-shin* can be seen well in the choreography in this second section.

22nd Rehearsal&Research: Thursday, February 3, 2022
The goal: Apply the notes and run the whole section at the end
Notes:

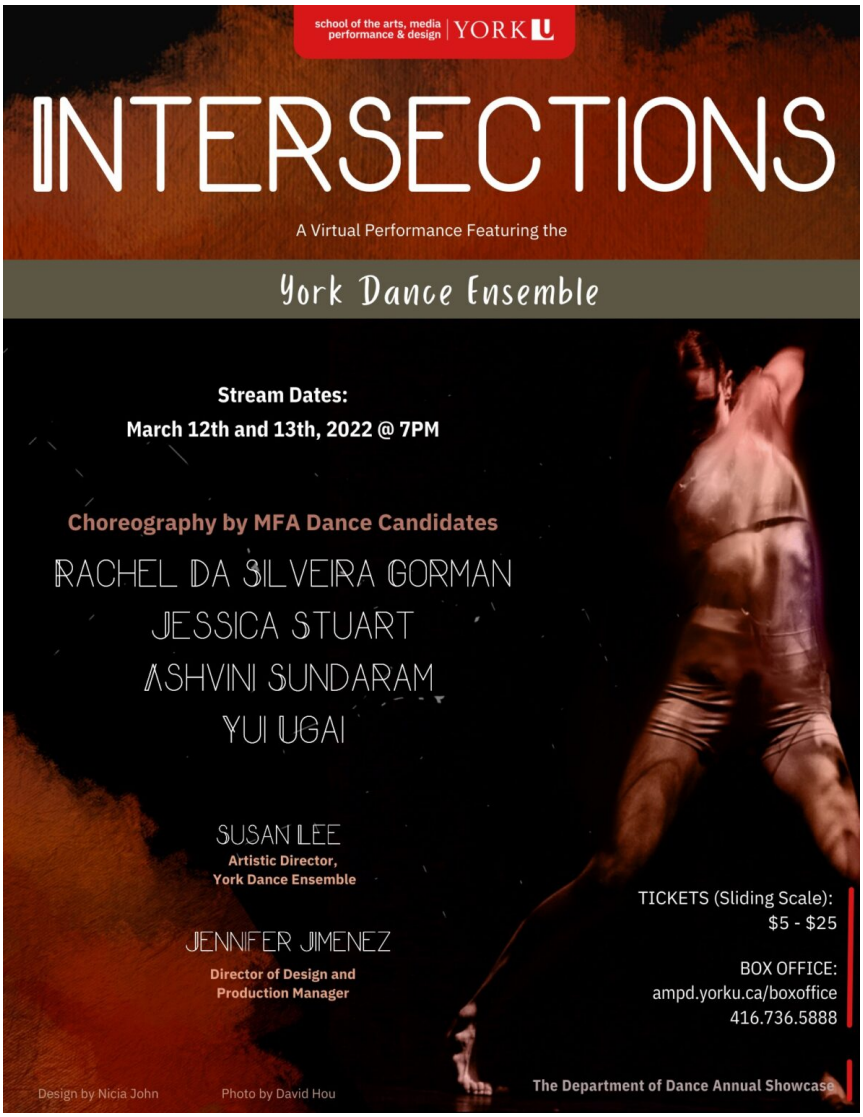
-Derek 2-8 extend his solo section
-Bayley angle flat rather than diagonal/dévelopé à la second
-Apply the canon with Blythe's section
-Fix the timing with Abbey+Derek's section
-Group section, try the different timing of the dévelopé
-Explore and hold the arch longer
-In Abbey's section with laying down, accent out not in and reach and release
-Blythe's section clean the count

Friday, February 4, 2022 Designer's Run

Notes and Journals from The Process of Tech and Dress Run
Because the piece was supposed to be performed on stage with the audience, we have choreographed the piece as it would be performed for the live audience. However, this presentation needed to be filmed due to the recent lockdown we faced. It was challenging to imagine how it works on camera until I actually see it on camera when the piece is on stage. The choreography is the same and the piece is the same. However, looking at the screen the dance piece looked completely different and I felt that I am creating a completely different product through the camera. Colour and space transformed into a different world and we needed to be extra cautious and be creative to imagine for the final product that is a film to display the work as lively as possible through the lens. It was a true collaborating process with other artists such as a lighting designer, a costume designer, composers, a paper artist, sound crews, a stage manager to make this thesis performance/presentation possible. I felt that it is a community and a small society to reflect the world that everyone's professionalism, passion, support, endeavour, and creative force can transform imagination into reality. The time at the theatre was short and although there could be an improvement, it was the best we could do in this peculiar pandemic time. I am grateful I have learned so much in this creative process to archive the goal as a group.

Appendix 2: Program and Link for The Final Thesis Performance

The Department of Dance presents Intersections featuring the York Dance Ensemble



The Department of Dance presents Intersections – a virtual dance performance of new choreography by MFA student choreographers featuring the York Dance Ensemble (YDE).

Intersections features new choreographic works by four Department of Dance MFA students, performed by the department's resident student company, the York Dance Ensemble.In this time of transition, understanding how we intersect and how the intersectionalities of race, gender, ethnicity, power, place, and time affect the present is more critical than ever. MFA choreographers Rachel da Silveira Gorman, Jessica Stuart, Ashvini Sundaram, and Yui Ugai bring their creative and artistic forces to bear, capitalizing on all we have learned through the pandemic in Intersections, a kinaesthetically charged, virtual performance of the Department of Dance Annual Showcase. Each choreographer investigates the overlaps, counterpoints, and margins of authorship, identity, and acknowledgment that pervade our life stories, while dancers move beyond limits and expectations to find new synergies of movement, nuance, and meaning.These exciting world premieres – *Golem* by Rachel da Silveira Gorman, *The Art of Time* by Ashvini Sundaram, *In Medias Res* by Jessica Stuart, and *New Nostalgia* by Yui Ugai are supported by the vision of YDE Artistic Director Susan Lee and feature the immensely talented members of the York Dance Ensemble.

Artistic Director & Course Director, York Dance Ensemble: Susan Lee
Outside Eyes: Susan Cash and Don Sinclair
Director of Design & Production Manager: Jennifer JimenezIntersections
March 12- 13 | 7:00 pm Admission: $5-$25
Box Office: 416-736-5888 | ampd.yorku.ca/boxoffice

Information about ***New Nostalgia***
Choreography: Yui Ugai and dancers
Dancers: Abbey Richens, Bayley Wyatt, Blythe Russell, Derek Souvannavong, Jessica Saftu, and Kelsey Bonvie
Music: Julia Kent and niconi commons
Paper Art: Christine Kim
Costume: Michiko Inoue
Lighting Design: Emily Bakker
Video Editor: German Prieto
Special thanks to Susan Lee, Patrick Alcedo, Susan Cash, Jennifer Jimenez, Tracey Norman, Bridget Cauthery, Scarlett Larry, Don Sinclair, Dave Wilson, MFA colleagues, and all the faculty members of the Department of Dance

The Link to The Final Dance Work, ***New Nostalgia***:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wBdh34AWdv1mT2cxYHfhkZ_CMeZkQR0E/view?usp=sharing